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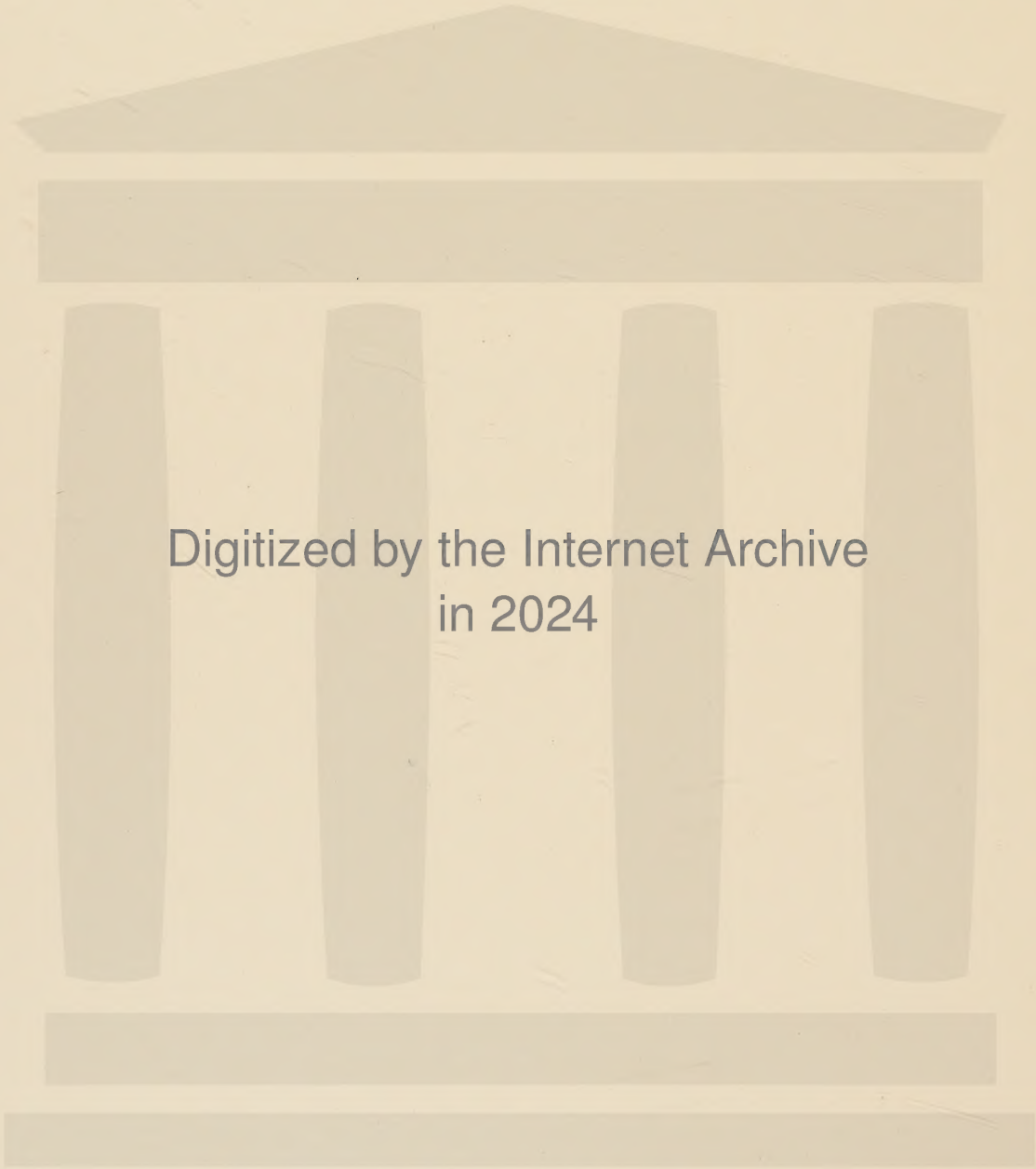
CHINESE PAINTING

As Reflected in the Thought and Art of

LI LUNG-MIEN



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CHINESE PAINTING

As Reflected in the Thought and Art of

LI LUNG-MIEN

1070-1106

BY AGNES E. MEYER

NEW YORK
Duffield & Company
1923

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D. B. Updike, The Merrymount Press, Boston
Printed in the United States of America

To
CHARLES LANG FREER

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PREFACE

THIS volume has been put together not for purely aesthetic or archaeological purposes, but because Chinese life and thought, of which Chinese art is the most sensitive record, has an especial value for us at present. In spite of all our scientific discoveries, the lessons of actuality have not yet been incorporated in our scheme of human behavior. The romantic, the philosophic, and the speculatively religious patterns established by our scholastic ancestry still hold us firmly in their grasp. Chinese life, on the other hand, was founded upon a highly developed understanding of the universe which, though lost at times, was ever recaptured and reinvigorated by later teachers who saw the value of that early wisdom. Until their thought degenerated completely — as all things must if only to make room for new efforts — the Chinese perfectly realized that all theory is vain, and that nature must be ever reconquered in order to be held at all, that the very process of living demands the constant annihilation of fancy for fact — only to have the elusive thing vanish once more in the effete subtilties of man's imaginings.

The very downfall of the Chinese proves their Taoist belief that contact with the environment, to remain such, must constantly renew itself, that even truth is not eternal.

And it is in the course of the conquest of our temporary truths that all such manifestations as religion, science, art, and philosophy are born. They are the records of the growth of the human spirit, and they are valuable to posterity only as they continue to contribute to that growth. To this extent are they interesting, as indications of the life quest; but woe to those people who would put them above the quest itself! Woe to those who

would live by dogmatic systems of philosophy or religion or art rather than keep their attention tenaciously fixed upon the natural sources of such achievements! Those are the innumerable souls who prefer theory to fact, conventions to living, and a closed mind to one fired by an adventurous and stimulating curiosity.

In the hope of explaining the rise and fall of one such human cultural phase, my book faintly outlines the origins, the growth, and the gradual decay of Chinese art, and analyzes the art itself as a further elucidation of this development. It attempts to picture, let us say, the swaying of the Chinese pendulum between custom and creation, the story of human conventions destroying humanity, the tragic inevitability of which is softened by the thought that tradition, as in the case of China, often makes us great before it slays us.

Of this compensatory wisdom, of the light that the gods permit us to see before they once more strike us blind, art, and particularly Chinese art, remains to the dark ages that follow as one of the brightest beacons to solace our benighted spirits and to guide our groping footsteps onward to yet another height. Thus regarded, and it seems to me only thus, does our hungry pursuit of beauty achieve a meaning, thus only does it become something more than a vulgar craving of the senses. And because Chinese art more than any other helps us to find new ways of looking at life; because it gives an as yet unfelt poignancy to the everyday aspect of this world, and restores the fundamental love of earth and of actual things; because it defines for us man's most elaborated idea of himself and the deep sane sources from which it sprang; and above all things, because it shows the vanity of man-made structures before the shattering forces of

natural processes, Chinese art indubitably has a claim to be the very greatest of all such manifestations.

In this evolutional picture, Li Lung-mien holds a place that makes him the crux of the entire development. Without being necessarily the greatest of the Chinese painters, as several native critics claim, he is unquestionably, viewed from some aspects, the most important, and it was therefore fortunate for me that I chose him as the object of my special study. I say fortunate, because the choice was blindly made, out of sheer preference for his work and a determination to avoid vagueness by confining my field of inquiry to the efforts of a single artist. I found, alas, that no individual, not even a Li Lung-mien, has a personal significance in China, since even contemporary records of great men are buried in generalities and myths. While groping for facts, I began to list all the paintings ascribed to Li Lung-mien, together with the descriptions and comments found in the Chinese art literature obtainable in the United States; and gradually there emerged the individuality that I had been seeking, and much besides. For I found that, bound up in one Chinese artist's life and interests, were those of all his predecessors and all who came after him. Of its own accord the story spread out until it touched the first dim years of Chinese history and illumined some of the very things that China feels and thinks to-day.

For this reason I publish the entire catalogue of Li Lung-mien as it was compiled. As a source of reference for collectors and students it may have a specialized interest; but its claim is broader than this, for in it is contained a mental picture of one of China's greatest men, together with his selection of what was noblest in her past from a political, philosophic,

and artistic standpoint. The historical sense of the Chinese, their insistence that the race lives by its memories, is here presented as it affected a given person at a given time. The broad learning that is needed to write an adequate account of so vast a subject is not mine, in spite of the able assistance that I have had from others; and if I have essayed the task, it is with the full realization that the material has been but lightly touched.

In arranging the paintings, the categories into which the great catalogue of the Emperor Hui-tsung, the Hsüan-ho Hua-p'u, is divided have been used, but the order in which they follow has been changed. The bibliography, of which only abbreviated titles are printed in the text of the catalogue, is given immediately after it. The measurements of Li Lung-mien's paintings are left in the form in which the Chinese critics have recorded them. I at first attempted to translate these figures into English equivalents according to the method suggested by Professor Friedrich Hirth in his article in the T'oung Pao; but finding them of so many different periods, I gave up the idea for fear of inaccuracy.

Some of the essays and poems found in the narrative have been translated by others, but they have been retranslated here because they were so necessary a part of the whole. These translations do not and cannot convey adequately the rich content of the originals, which often ring with the reverberations that centuries of a poetic and scholarly heritage alone can give; but I hope that the accuracy for which I have striven will atone for the lamentable absence of poetic overtones.

My profound thanks are due to Mr. T. Y. Leo, without whose broad scholarship and untiring zeal the innumerable translations which were necessary could never have been made, and to Professor Friedrich Hirth,

whose constant help and encouragement in my studies of the Chinese language I shall never be able to repay. To Frederic W. Ellis, Clayton Hamilton, and Carl W. Bishop I wish also to acknowledge a special debt for their careful and critical reading of my completed manuscript.

But first and last is my gratitude, my profound admiration, and my unfaltering devotion due to that greatest lover of the Chinese sense of life and beauty, Charles Lang Freer, whose genius those who were fortunate enough to experience it can never forget. His was the clearest vision of what China has yet to give us; and his death was as happy as his life had been inspired, because of the consciousness that his great work of bringing to the Occident the best that China has produced was being so magnificently accomplished. I feel what I have done here as nothing but a dim reflection of his great light; founded upon his teaching and his insight, it is but the beginning of that unending quest upon which he has started all who shall rightly see the oriental treasures that he has amassed—a quest not for a new world, but for this same old ever present world which the Chinese knew and loved so well—a quest on which I travel happily and hopefully without the pretense of having arrived.

AGNES E. MEYER

July 16, 1923
Mt. Kisco, New York

NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The catalogue of Li Lung-mien's paintings and the bibliography have been omitted from this edition, but the references to the catalogue have been left to indicate statements that are substantiated by it. References to illustrations are by plate numbers which are cross-indexed under the list of illustrations.

CHINESE PAINTING

THE PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND OF LI LUNG-MIEN

I

THE Chinese are the only civilized people of whom it may truly be said that they were at home in the world. They are the one example of a race-mentality that from its first recorded thought put the centre of gravity in the universe, instead of placing it, as occidental culture always has, within the human breast. Our western civilization, through its heritage of Greek anthropomorphism and the Christian belief that man alone was made in the image of God, has for centuries created a vast chasm between man and his surroundings, and forced him to think of himself as something precious and apart. This narcissism, humanity's worship of itself, the Chinese avoided, for they have given an uninterrupted consideration to the cosmic mechanism, and have ever remembered to look upon man as merely one of nature's innumerable manifestations, whose welfare lay in understanding natural laws and living in accordance with them. And since they looked out upon the world with interest rather than with fear, they learned gladly and joyously to play the humble part assigned to individual man in that vast structure, without wasting their energies on making that part seem more important than it is.

This utter impersonality, this emphasis of the social rather than the individual self, is the first characteristic that captures the attention in reading the Chinese records of the life and work of the Sung painter, Li Lung-mien. These records one and all observe a sequence of praise wholly new and strange to the western reader, for they place at the head of his many distinctions the nobility of his character, then speak of his reverence for China's antiquities and of his zeal as a collector, and only lastly allude to the seemingly much less important fact that he was the most famous painter of his day, if not of all time.

"What energy remained," declares the Hua Chi, after describing Li's fine discrimination and enthusiasm as a collector, "was devoted to painting." The biographical section of the "History of the Sung Dynasty" is even more extreme in this attitude, for it says: "He had a transcendently distinguished mind and manners that were much admired by all the famous scholars of his day. Huang Shan-ku said of him that the poetical and gracious nature of his conduct and character was inferior to none of the ancients. However, he suffered greatly from his ability as a painter, since he is known to the world only for his art." In an inscription by Li on the painting of one of his greatest masters, Yen Li-pên, he defines his own attitude toward art. "Divine accomplishment in pictorial art," he writes, "is not incompatible with being a man of character and ability. On the other hand, if a man is really able and good, it will only add to the value of his artistic skill." Moreover, an examination of the catalogue of his paintings reveals the fact that most of them are free copies, many of them actual tracings of ancient works, done either for the purpose of preserving some old masterpiece that had been ill-used by time, or simply out of admiration and as a tribute to the artistic achievement of one of his famous predecessors; and those paintings which seem to be originals are devoted to the portrayal of China's development either from the historical or from the cultural point of view. From this it would appear that the Chinese artist strove primarily to achieve a character that might approach in beauty and merit those of the great sages of the past; only in the second place he thought of his art, and then largely as an instrument for the celebration of former minds and former events. He must in all respects be worthy of the finest that had gone before him if he would, without impairing it, transmit his exalted heritage to the ages yet to come. To this end every ability that he might possess was developed, but not as an end in itself. The sterile aestheticism of art for art's

sake was an impossible conception to one for whom all expression was but an opportunity for maintaining the continuity of life.

This attitude of service is so taken for granted in the Chinese manuscripts and so radically different from the occidental artist's emphasis of self, that the westerner cannot understand the mentality behind this impersonal conception, unless he tries to discover the sources from which it sprang and the currents that fed its growth. For it must be borne in mind that the development of Chinese culture experienced no violent breaks such as Europe suffered when Greece gave way to Rome, Rome to the Goth, and the Mediaeval Age to the Renaissance. China's culture, though it waned at times, was nevertheless unbroken from its semi-historical beginnings about three thousand years B.C. to its climax in the T'ang dynasty (A.D. 618–907); and only an analysis of its first frank outlook upon the world and a survey of its steady and unified upbuilding can reveal the mental and spiritual influences in which at its height it expressed itself. This does not mean that in China revolutions were either less frequent or less violent than in Europe; but so firm was the foundation of what was literally their *Weltanschauung* that it withstood upheavals of all sorts unimpaired, and assimilated, without changing its essential character, any influence to which it was exposed. Just as the Chinese race has always absorbed and made part of itself the races with which it came into conflict, so the primitive Chinese concepts grew either from their own inner strength, as in the time of Confucius and Laotzŭ, or because they absorbed new life by spiritual conquest, as the Buddhist invasion demonstrates.

Therefore, in order to understand the work of an eleventh century painter and his attitude toward it, we must first have a clear perspective of the age-long and unbroken development of which he, in his moment, tried deliberately to make himself a part. To tear him from that great unity is to leave him

incomprehensible. The words he speaks, the pictures he paints, his ideals, his friendships, his mode of life, all are mere riddles unless we try to see them through his eyes. Nor could any other painter that was ever produced by this culture illustrate more clearly, or in more diversified directions than does Li Lung-mien, the strength and the exquisiteness of Chinese tradition. His is one of the noblest examples of what a powerful heritage can do for mankind when it is of such a nature as to free the spirit instead of binding it. Not only was Li a high-minded character, a discriminating collector, and the greatest painter of his time, but he was also a man of wide learning, of deeply philosophic temper, a man of splendid literary attainments, and for thirty years an honored government official. To judge his virtues or his limitations, in order to decide how nearly he fulfilled the ideals he had set for himself and what the forces were that created those ideals for him, we must for the moment forget the individual and strive for a comprehension of his cultural setting.

II

THE basis of Chinese life and thought was a powerful philosophic tradition, which in its main direction was already perfectly defined in those remote ages when Chinese history began to emerge from the mythological stage. The fundamental aspects of this philosophic tradition are, first, the fact that from its earliest appearance it drove the mind outward toward a contemplation of the universe and the processes of nature, and secondly, the fact that this outward-turning habit of mind became not only the dominant trait of their philosophic thinking but the basis also of their religion, their ethics, and their social structure. This fortunate integration of thought gave the race a powerful unity in its motives and interests, saved it from loss of energy and devitalizing

of impulses through mental conflicts, and left it free of all necessity for inward willing, so that all its creative force could be spent in outward willing, that is, in actual living and producing.

For, somehow, the Chinese had what, from the modern point of view, would be adjudged the best possible kind of beginning. They must have had the good fortune to live on a soil so beneficent that their minds were not forced by the rigors of life into consideration of other-worldly compensation or into the creation of one or more protective personal deities. In their primitive concepts there were no traces of a propitiatory attitude toward nature, none of those elements of fear so numerous in the mythologies of all other races, which have to be overcome before further progress is possible. The Egyptians died still dominated by their gods, the Greeks and Romans had to live theirs down or transmute them in order to develop their real contributions to later civilization, but the primitive thought of the Chinese was such that it could become the basis of the metaphysical and political systems of their later constructive thinkers.

Nor is the tenacity and endurance of their early beliefs at all astonishing to the modern mind when we realize that they were founded not on the usual mystic awe of nature and the consequent deification of forces that were not understood, but upon close observation of the heavens, which resulted, more than four thousand years ago, in an astronomical science so truly learned, systematic, and instrumental that it has been equalled in method and exactness by our occidental world only for some two hundred years.[1] Noting the harmony of the solar system, they decided that there must correspond to it a harmony of earthly things, and upon their observation of the heavenly firmament they strove to regulate all their terrestrial interests. Having recognized

[1] See the important articles by Leopold de Saussure on "L'astronomie chinoise dans l'antiquité" in the *T'oung Pao*, Ser. II, Vols. IX and X.

and learned to love the order of their environment, they sought an exact parallelism between its laws and the laws of man, in the hope that this same order might then prevail in human affairs. To this end formulas were found in the positions and movements of the stars that determined both the correct organization of the state and the proper conduct of the individual. To the pre-eminence of Tai-yi, the North Star, corresponded the imperial preëminence on earth, and both were worshipped for a sacredness that was identical in character. The ancient empire of Yü the Great (*c.* 2205 B.C.) was divided into a central province containing the capital, the dwelling-place of the emperor, and eight other provinces arranged in such a way as to represent as nearly as possible the eight divisions of the circumference. As the pole-star was the centre of heaven, so the throne was the centre of the earth, and since the prime divisions of the circumference are those into four or eight parts, the emperors, putting themselves in the forefront of the universe, referred to their imperial persons, even down to the late establishment of a republic, as "We, the pre-eminence of nine and five." The Chinese of those early days did not invent a personal god to stand between them and the world's immensity, and "The Emperor on High," as the North Star was called, enjoyed in ancient times no greater sanctity than did the emperor on earth. This point must be emphasized in order to bring home to our anthropomorphic and theistic minds the purely physical character of early Chinese thought. No god or gods were created apart from the universe to symbolize their craving for the immaterial, but in the unchanging character of nature's laws they beheld a beauty far more satisfying than the petty imaginings of man, and only through a comprehension of the actual did they seek for and find the eternal.

Instead of a deity to create the world, they were content with the abstract principles of the *Yang*, the hot, dry, male element, and the *Yin*, the cold,

moist, female element, which, exteriorized as heaven and earth, had through their interaction produced all things. Notably they had set in motion the five elements of earth, wood, metal, fire, and water, and the history of all forms of life consisted in the fixed and astronomically determined evolutions of these substances. It was this evolution that resulted in the four seasons; moreover, to these five elements corresponded the five personal virtues, just as the *Yang* and *Yin* expressed themselves in human affairs in the male and female, the father and mother, in the superior and inferior, the prince and his subjects. In ways such as this did the celestial universe constantly influence the terrestrial world according to a physico-chemical determinism of purely sidereal origin; and the sacredness of the calendar was due to the fact that it established and recorded this harmonious progression. Compared with our modern knowledge, the naturalistic basis of their culture was slight, but even if their physics can be summed up in the antithesis of two principles and their chemistry in the evolution of five elements, these hypotheses are nevertheless noteworthy for the understanding which they show of universal determinism and the evolutional character of the earth's development, as well as the objective search for the basic facts of life which such discoveries imply.[1]

This interrelation of their science, ethics, and religion is the explanation of the firmness and grandeur of their earliest civilization, whose magnificent bronzes and jades fortunately still exist to demonstrate the geometrical and physical nature of their thought as well as the artistic and scientific knowledge which must have been the possession of the age that created them. Their feet were planted upon the soil while their eyes looked starward for guidance, and thus, firmly interwoven with their environment, they withstood shock after shock, while European cultures tumbled one before the other. Instead of

[1] See further astronomical articles by De Saussure, *T'oung Pao*, Ser. II, Vol. XI.

writing myths about the gods, they built canals and embankments that demanded great engineering skill, made agricultural discoveries, invented astronomical instruments to chart the skies, and compasses with which to traverse the expanse of waste lands that separated them from their neighbors. It is necessary to mention that, because of this close association of religion and experience, the early Chinese have been called practical and dull in comparison with the imaginative Greeks; but who can dare to say that more imagination is implied in the worship of Demeter and Dionysus than in the discovery and application to life of a theory of evolution? The main difference between the two races lies not in quantity of imagination, but in the directions which their interests took. For the Greeks became constantly more speculative and dissociated from the actual conduct of life, whereas the Chinese thinkers, even in their most imaginative flights, sought constantly to find a practical rule for the adjustment of man to his environment. The one race, to our misfortune, evolved an elaborate system of abstract logic that has uselessly sapped, to this very day, the energies of untold generations of thinking men; the other race evolved a system of behavior which grew through active experimentation and made for productivity and happiness during well-nigh four thousand years.

III

As there is nothing of a really primitive character in the thought of these earliest Chinese records, a long development, of which we as yet know nothing, must have preceded such an intelligent attitude toward life. It may indeed be asked why the tendency toward physical inquiry did not continue, to which the probable answer is that these researches were necessarily not of a modern nature but of a social, quasi-religious character that soon forbade extensions

and innovations. Historical reasons, which have not yet been entirely clarified, must also have contributed to the cessation of these naturalistic explorations. We know only that the great constructive era of Chinese thought is still but dimly discerned as the reigns of those five semi-mythical emperors, beginning with Fu-hsi (*c.* 3322 B.C.) and ending with Yü the Great (*c.* 2205 B.C.), the founder of the Hsiâ dynasty (2205–1818 B.C.). Though later historians may have interpolated contemporary ideas in some of the ancient texts, it is nevertheless reasonably certain that most of China's basic ideas concerning the physical universe were in existence when that period of rulers, half-real, half-legendary, came to an end. Yü's son was designated as the first hereditary emperor; and by the time his grandson ascended the throne, complete disorganization had fallen upon this erstwhile peaceful land. Continual revolts of the powerful clans, assassinations of rulers, and attempted oppression were ended only when the Shangs, in 1766 B.C., became strong enough to enforce obedience from their rival overlords, and thus establish a new, if not a better, sovereignty. At this time the first losses in astronomical knowledge and instrumentation must have taken place, for this department was under the private protection of the emperors and was necessarily neglected under helpless or inferior rulers. Appointments to the astronomical board were surely then, as so often in later reigns, made arbitrarily and for ulterior purposes, rather than for merit and fitness. Furthermore, the various discoveries and treatises were, at times, deliberately destroyed by powerful vassals with whose ambitions these state regulations interfered.

Whatever the explanation, the tendency toward new physical research ended with the early Hsiâs, and the trend in these matters thereafter was to preserve sacredly the crumbs of ancient research, and to regain, if possible, the knowledge and methods that had been lost. Since the impulse to make for

themselves even the discoveries which antiquity had been able to find was absent, a real change in their intellectual drives must have taken place; and the best that later ages achieved was the knowledge that the health and happiness of the empire lay in a return to the deductions for the management of the state which the sages of China's almost prehistoric period had made from their exploration of natural laws. In other words, as soon as we have any Chinese history, we perceive an already fully developed historical-mindedness.

The Shang dynasty (1766–1122 B.C.) was an extremely agitated and non-constructive interlude; but it was succeeded by remarkably able rulers, the emperors of Chou (1122–255 B.C.), who devoted the first four hundred years of their reign to the recording and amplification of all that was best in ancient Chinese thought.

The historical continuity between the Chous and their predecessors was cemented by several important documents that had, in some way, been preserved throughout the turbulent years. Among these was the interesting "Canon of Yao,"[1] which describes the astronomical division of the empire, and enabled De Saussure to reconstruct and date the earliest astronomical discoveries; the "Canon of Shun," Yao's successor, is no less vivid in its descriptions of the gradual and orderly upbuilding of the Chinese state; "The Counsels of the Great Yü" is a more detailed account; but most illuminating of all these prehistoric remnants is "The Tribute of Yü," which narrates the herculean labors of this monarch in fighting the devastating floods, and then outlines with exactness his division of territory and his system of taxation. "This book, if we could credit it," says Legge,[2] "would be a sort of

[1] For translations and discussions of all these books, see the Shû King in Legge's *Texts of Confucianism*, Vol. III. Oxford, second edition.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

domesday book of China in the twenty-third century B.C., in the compass of a few pages." In recompiling this collection of their historical memorials, the scholars of the early Chou dynasty no doubt made changes and additions,[1] and some of the records may have been rewritten outright; but many of the facts which they embody now appear to have been historically accurate, and even the idealization, if such it was, of these titanic figures of the empire's legendary age must have been the result of their racial memories.

These noble records of a noble age are borne out, in the character of their content, by an historically more valid document called "The Great Plan," which is supposed to have been delivered to Wu, first Emperor of Chou, by the Count of Chi, Grand Master to the Court of the Shangs.[2] "When we read this book," says Legge, "we see that it belonged originally to the time of Hsiâ, and that the larger portion of it should be ascribed to the Great Yü, and was as old, indeed, as the reign of Yao." Because of its greater claim to reliability, even though so great an antiquity may be doubted, "The Great Plan" may be quoted more extensively. It contains a complete outline of what purports to be the ancient system of government, and gives in the simplest form the characteristics of the early Chinese mentality, which, though they became subtler, more comprehensive, and more complex as social intercourse became more involved, nevertheless remained essentially the same. Thus, to understand this era is, in spite of all surface elaborations, to understand China at any age.

The first two sections of "The Great Plan" explain how the evolution of the five elements in the universal macrocosm is reflected in the human microcosm through the successive development of the five personal virtues.

[1] See Legge's Introduction to the Shû King, and De Saussure's discussion of the Canon of Yao, in the *T'oung Pao*, Vol. IX.

[2] Legge, Shû King, p. 137.

The eight departments of administration which Yü the Great enumerates under section three give, through the order of their sequence, an excellent idea of the amazing civilization which those early rulers had attained, as well as a clear insight into their marvellously pragmatic thinking. In order to maintain perfect peace in this world, a wise emperor will first attend to agriculture, since food is the prime necessity; then he will look to accessory needs in the development of commerce; thirdly, he will insist upon the sacrificial rites through which the forces of nature are propitiated; the Ministry of Works must superintend the division of land and the protection of property; public instruction is next in importance; then comes the suppression of crime; a separate department devoted to the protection of strangers and travellers indicates the animated life of the period; only at the end is the imperial consideration given to the army, for even at that time the Chinese sages had learned to look upon war as the last and the worst of expedients.

"The Great Plan" also devotes a whole section to astronomy, and to the intricate theory of numbers which grew out of it and ever remained so important a part of the Chinese theory of knowledge.

As the emperor is the pivotal point of earthly things, the fifth or central section is devoted to his dignity and duties. He holds his exalted place by the will of Heaven, but "if the common people complain, he may be assured that Heaven is dissatisfied with him." If, on the other hand, "the people are satisfied with his rule, he may be certain that Heaven is likewise satisfied." Thus did religion conform to reality.

The same delightfully sensible attitude toward mystical things is revealed in the ideas of the Great Yü upon divination.[1] In discussing this important topic under section seven he announces: "When in doubt about any great matter,

[1] A very ancient method of foretelling the future by means of the tortoise-shell and divining-rods.

consult your mind; consult your high ministers and officers; consult with the common people; consult the tortoise-shell and divining-stalks."[1] And in his "Counsels"[2] he puts the matter even more bluntly when he says: "One should first make up his mind, and afterwards refer to the great tortoise-shell."

"The Great Plan" emphasizes above all things the interwelding of man's fortunes with the elements of earth and air. Much of this feeling for physical phenomena was unquestionably of a near-superstitious nature, but as a rule even their so-called superstitions concealed a reasonable attitude which their lack of instrumentation and research could not make manifest. The important point is that their tendencies were objective in trend, were constantly based on the appeal to reality, and thereby maintained in them an ever-recurrent readiness to submit their theoretical deductions to the test of external fact.

Undoubtedly the most important document for the preservation and practical application of the ancient codes is the Yî Ching, "The Book of Changes," the compilation of which was begun by the father of the first Chou emperor,[3] though much of it harks back to a still remoter date, and completed in later centuries by Confucius and his disciples.[4] This ancient classic is the one that shows most clearly the unity in Chinese thought of physical laws with the social order and the moral equilibrium. The character "Yî," meaning "change," is made up of the character that denotes the sun placed over that of the moon, their very language structure thus demonstrating their belief that human events follow an evolution akin to that of natural phenomena. The scientific foundation for the laws which the Yî contains had, even as early as the Chou dynasty, been lost and poetical explanations substituted; but it nevertheless contained for the Chinese the whole sum of human wisdom, and the great

[1] Legge, Shû King, p. 146.

[2] Hirth, *Ancient History of China*, p. 59.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 50.

[4] Legge, *Texts of Confucianism*, Vol. III, p. 26.

Confucius is later reported to have said of it: "If some years were added to my life, I would give fifty to the study of the Yî, and might then escape falling into great errors." It consisted of sets of eight trigrammes,[1] discovered supposedly by Fu-hsi, the first of the semi-mythical emperors mentioned by Chinese historians. The trigrammes were founded on the division into two of the four seasons of the year by the equinoxes and solstices, in each of which demi-seasons the *Yin* and the *Yang* appear inversely.[2] The reasoning has been obscured by time and is now extremely difficult to follow even by the Chinese, but enough of it has been rediscovered to prove that the trigrammes were logically constructed from astronomical facts and not casually invented by a mythical emperor. Though the exact basis for the deductions was lost, the feeling for it remained and the frank dependence of their ideals for behavior upon the mechanistic behavior of natural phenomena is clearly stated again and again. In the Appendices we read:[3]

"Anciently, when the rule of all under heaven was in the hands of Pao-hsi [Fu-hsi], looking up, he contemplated the brilliant forms exhibited in the sky; and, looking down, he surveyed the patterns shown on the earth. He marked the ornamental appearances on birds and beasts, and the suitabilities of the soil. Near at hand, in his own person, he found things for consideration and the same at a distance in things in general. On this he devised the eight lineal figures of three lines each, to exhibit fully the spirit-like and intelligent operations [in nature], and to classify the qualities of the myriads of things."

With these trigrammes as the key, all questions of politics, religion, and ethics are then analyzed and answered. An elucidation of the methods does

[1] Three lines, broken or unbroken, placed one above the other. See Legge.

[2] De Saussure, *T'oung Pao*, Vol. XI, p. 227.

[3] Legge, *Texts of Confucianism*, Yî Ching, Vol. III, p. 11.

not concern us here, but their practical value must be incontestable if measured by the length of time that they have served as one of the main bulwarks of Chinese civilization.

IV

THE continuation of the splendid work of the Western, or early, Chou dynasty became endangered as the characters of their emperors degenerated, and the entire structural continuity was threatened when powerful vassals, notably the rulers of Ch'i and Ch'in and Ch'u, began to usurp the sovereignty of the central government.[1] The intricate hierarchy, as well as the theories upon which it rested, might yet have been lost, had not all the literature of the early Chou dynasty as well as that of the previous, more scientifically minded age, been rescued by the greatest historian that any race has ever produced. In the middle of the sixth century, Confucius devoted himself to the reëditing of all the ancient historical and philosophical texts, and his influence as an individual was commensurate with that of his literary endeavors.[2] The early emperors had greatly elaborated the theory of state-ceremony which the Chou Li still records in detail, but Confucius now applied the same minute regulations to the conduct of the individual, and his personal demeanor was as a beacon-light, not only to his dissolute contemporaries, but to centuries of Chinese scholars who sought in him the pattern of a great and beautifully mannered gentleman.

So sympathetic with the ancient texts was the work of Confucius that it is often difficult to determine what part was of older origin and what was added by the great philosopher and his fellow-commentators, an indication in itself of the unity of thought between the Confucian age and the primitives. In fact,

[1] Hirth, *Ancient History of China*, Sec. V. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 251–257.

most sinologues are convinced that "what Confucius taught was not so much the creation of his own philosophic mind as the result of his historical studies,"[1] and Confucius speaks of himself as "a transmitter and not a maker, believing and loving the ancients."[2] This would seem to be the case, for we find in Confucius the same attempt to establish harmony between heaven and earth, which is the sum total of the ancient lore. Just as they looked to the laws that govern the stars for the laws that govern man, so Confucius turned to nature as a basis for his ethical and political homilies, not because of poetical-mindedness, but because his system for the family and the state, his belief in filial piety and ceremony, were the direct outcome of his inherited knowledge of nature's beautiful patterns and their orderly progression. If he could give to the social structure the careful organization that he observed in the cosmic processes, would he not win for humanity the same harmonious unity of changeless laws, working together for an unending evolution? Since modern scientists[3] admit as true the Chinese belief of a corresponding harmony between the meteorological and the organic cycles, we must concede to their method of finding in the mechanisms of the universe an analogy for the natural behavior of man, a superb logic, an elemental quality, a something so inevitable that the beauty of the system of ceremonials and their preservative function become readily comprehensible even to the occidental mind.

For documentary proof of Confucius' adherence to the ancient mode of thought, no better example can be chosen than the Yî Ching, to which we have already alluded. The Appendices, some of which are supposed to have been written by Confucius himself, the rest by his followers, are in absolute harmony with the spirit of the body of the text and show clearly how post-

[1] Hirth, *Ancient History of China*, p. 241.
[2] Legge, *Texts of Confucianism*, Vol. III, p. 3.
[3] Henderson, *The Order of Nature*, Chap. 6.

Confucian philosophy built upon the ancient ideas, amplifying, making more sophisticated definitions with wider applications, but keeping closely to the old quality and attitude of mind. But let us turn to his own words when he describes the ideal man:[1]

"The Great Man is he who is in harmony in his attributes with heaven and earth; in his brightness with the sun and moon; in his orderly procedure with the four seasons; and in his relation to what is fortunate and what is calamitous with the spiritual agents."

Lest some anthropomorphic western mind should misunderstand the significance of "spiritual agents," let it be stated that "kuei shên," the Chinese equivalent, is defined by the philosopher Chu Hsi as "a name for the process of growth and decay," and by another Sung philosopher as "the contracting and expanding energies of nature."[2] In other words, Chinese philosophy permits of no dualism. The physical and spiritual aspects of things are one, and the harmony that must exist between them is the dominant thought of the ancient "Book of Changes" as well as the Confucian Appendices.

There is no doubt that the "kuei shên" had a less abstract interpretation with the populace of China, especially in the later Chou dynasty, when the loosening of state-control and a widespread Tartar influence gave ample room for the development of superstition.[3] But in its first manifestations the large and varying demonology which gradually arose and multiplied, creating local and innumerable gods of the soil and household, was simply a wholesome popular expression of the more profound attitude toward nature which the social and philosophic systems embodied.

[1] Legge, *Texts of Confucianism*, Vol. III, p. 47. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 45 and 46.

[3] Hirth, *Ancient History of China*, pp. 268–273.

V

CONTEMPORARY with this reinvigoration of the classic texts and the ancient rules of state was another less formulated but no less powerful stimulus to the development of Chinese life. Just as Confucius strove for the political and moral organization of his country, so Laotzŭ emphasized the values of the purely metaphysical aspect of its life. For Laotzŭ, too, was no innovator but a great thinker who made more definite a tendency toward individualism that, side by side with Confucian conformity, had always existed in the Chinese mentality. Though each of these great men is supposed to have thought his philosophy to be irreconcilable with that of his contemporary, both their systems are based upon the same hypotheses and diverge only in that they emphasize different phases of the same theory of nature; the laws that Laotzŭ applied to the individual, Confucius used to strengthen the relationship of the individual to the state; but so related and coherent were their views that most of those who later called themselves Taoists saw no contradiction in calling themselves also Confucians.

Laotzŭ's great document is the Tao Tê Ching,[1] which he wrote before disappearing forever from the knowledge of his contemporaries. "He so loved obscurity that he deliberately effaced all traces of his life." In spite of this, many sinologues can prove conclusively that Laotzŭ never existed and could not have written the Tao Tê Ching; but from the historical point of view this question is just as important as the discussions concerning the existence of Moses or Christ. Even if somebody invented them, it matters not. There they are with their undeniable actuality as influences on the ages past, present, and to come. Whether or not a man named Laotzŭ wrote the Tao Tê Ching, it is nevertheless the fundamental document of Taoism, of which Laotzŭ was the accredited founder.

[1] See *Catalogue*, Category III, No. 53.

In the very opening of the Tao Tê Ching it is stated: "Before the beginning of time, there was a Divine Principle, ineffable, unnameable. While it was unnameable, it conceived heaven and earth. When it had thus become nameable, it gave birth to all beings." In other words, the *Yin* and *Yang* are changed into the Divine Principle or Tao, but the conceptions are identical. And how different from our Genesis, in which God creates the world and remains remote enough to see that it was good; for the Chinese the divine power becomes nameable, tangible, becomes the world itself, so that henceforth whatever there be of the spiritual and the eternal must be sought in the world and not beyond it. Assuredly they more than any other race were convinced that heaven lay about them.

The Tao comprehended many more of the early beliefs. It was a restatement in metaphysical terms of what the early astronomers had demonstrated in exact science, and it succeeded in reincorporating as part of the feeling-tone of the race what earlier had been their intellectual conclusion—that the universe can be interpreted as a rhythmical and unified progression, and that the unchanging force which had produced man and his environment could be further trusted to develop the situation if man but comprehended this "universal becoming" and taught his heart to beat in the self-same measure. This is nothing but a restatement of the idea of evolution and adaptation on which the Yî Ching spends all its admonitions; so unified in fact is the teaching of Laotzŭ with those of the primitives that the Chinese refer to "Huang-Lao" as the founder of Taoism, giving thereby equal credit to the semi-mythical Emperor Huang-ti.

Though Confucianism and Taoism were based upon the same conception of the universe, their aims differed in that the Confucians were interested mainly in the application of natural law to group life, to the relationships of man to man, whereas the Taoists sought to understand and define the law

itself. They were consequently eager to maintain an unbroken contact with the source of their inspiration, with nature; and it became their lot to continue China's old hermit-philosophy with its staunch tradition of independence, as it became that of the Confucians to rebuild the ancient and beautiful structure of the state. Whereas Taoism continued the Chinese insistence upon the freedom of the individual and the importance of individual contribution to society, Confucianism, through its emphasis of relationship and continuity, preserved and developed these contributions for the good of the community and its descendants. Though the Taoist at times sacrificed every vestige of social responsibility in order to maintain his personal integrity, this was not egotistically done; the thoughts which he formulated in his mountain fastnesses no less greatly and no less definitely guided the destinies of his fellow-countrymen. "If Heaven and Earth endure forever," said Laotzŭ, "it is because they do not exist for themselves." Thus did their constant dependence upon externality, individualists though they were, save them from the morass of subjectivity, and their lives were just as splendidly purposeful as those of their more Confucianized fellow-citizens.

Nor must we let ourselves see China as torn between the two tendencies. Except at periods of great mental and political stress, both ideals, having a common basis, existed successfully in the same mentality, and men were called Confucians or Taoists because one or the other aim predominated, and not because either was ever entirely absent. This mingling of motives, this fostering of individual and communistic ideals that sprang from a common source, became the mainspring of China's breadth and elasticity of mind; for just as the integration of their various interests lent strength and solidarity to their culture, so this interaction of communism and individualism fertilized their imaginations and stimulated them to a variety and splendor of expression.

VI

In spite of the forceful restatements which the Chinese system of government and thought obtained through Laotzŭ and Confucius, and again in the fourth century B.C. from their no less brilliant disciples, Chuangtzŭ and Mencius, the disintegration of the Chou dynasty could no longer be stemmed. The power and position of the emperor were gradually usurped by powerful vassals,[1] and from the disintegration of the national organization there resulted a laxity in individual conduct with which Confucius and his followers were powerless to contend.

So great was the recuperative power of Chinese thinking that after centuries of pitiful chaos and the destruction of most of the classic literature,[2] it rose again and, under the rulers of Han (202 B.C.–A.D. 220), dominated the country with all its former certainty and with the same magnificent results. By its broad enterprise, its eager development of contacts with foreign lands, and its great productivity, the Han dynasty illustrated what a return to the early ideas as reinterpreted by Laotzŭ and Confucius could do for the development of the country. The emperors again became powerful enough to maintain themselves as the sole mediators between heaven and earth, and through mental honesty, humaneness, and simplicity, regained the confidence and loyalty of their people. Scholarship and a knowledge of the Confucian classics were permanently exalted through the institution of a civil-service examination, and democracy of an intellectual sort was assured, inasmuch as the examinations were open to all. Governmental forms were fixed, of an administrative, military, judicial, and social nature, that have endured in China down

[1] Hirth, *Ancient History of China*, Sec. VI.

[2] The first Ch'in Emperor burned most of the ancient literature in 213 B.C. and proscribed its possession on pain of death.

to the present day,[1] and the freedom of intercourse that again existed between the ruler and the ruled was such that it became an ideal and a byword for later and less fortunate eras. Even if the age had not quite the elemental vigor of the earlier periods, it had breadth and sanity and a poise whose quality can still be felt by any one who studies the sturdy and all but unbroken outlines of the bronzes, jades, and potteries which it produced in such profusion.

If we look back for a moment, it becomes clear that China had now enjoyed for a period of three thousand years an unbroken stream of objective thinking. This objectivity had been achieved through an early appreciation of the importance of natural laws, derived mainly from an observation of the astral firmament; and the whole structure of their civilization, whether social, ethical, or religious, was as close an analogy as they could find to their understanding of this physical mechanism. In contrast to the occidental situation, they evolved thereby, not a contradictory field of philosophy and religion, but a system of behavior whose integral quality spared them the schisms between religion and philosophy or religion and science, that disastrous inner struggle of self against self which saps so much of the energy of occidental races. The whole history of their mental progress was free to a singular degree from the devastating inroads of fear and doubt. Theirs was never the lot to feel within themselves a dozen different heritages, each pulling in a different direction, but in the full triumph of life they achieved that peace which for us passeth all understanding.

Nor was there anything static about this perfect equilibrium. It was essentially dynamic, for in nature, with its endless creating and its beautiful workmanship, they had the best example for well-directed activity, and they pos-

[1] See *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, June, 1920,—T. H. Koo, "The Constitutional Development of the Western Han Dynasty."

sessed, through the integral quality of their lives, that *sine quâ non* of great and diversified production, harmony between all the various groups of their memories, whether racial or individual. Moreover, their constant turning of the mind out toward the world instead of in upon itself not only created constant need for expression, but saved them from the narrowing influence of anthropocentrism, from the morbidity of an exaggerated introspection, and the consequent over-emphasis of self, that continuous subjective stultification of the mind which is still permitted to impede our action and obscure our thought.

Emerson in one of his inspired moments clearly divined the character of this people when he said: "The test of the poet is the power to take the passing day and hold it up to a divine reason till he sees it to have a purpose and beauty, and to be related to astronomy and history and the eternal order of the world. Then the dry twig blossoms in his hand. He is coalesced and elevated." This is pure Taoism, pure Confucianism. Poets all, a nation of poets, were the children of Chou and Han, and so true and strong was their vision that its clarity of insight survived in the thought and the productions of their remotest descendants.

VII

And then came Buddhism. To this well-ruled, well-adjusted, and energetic people with their highly developed spirit of physical inquiry now came the static Buddhist doctrine that the fountain of knowledge is the "pure bright self-enlightening mind." To those minds that had been taught by all their sages to look outward came the word that "to look outward was to be a common man," whereas "to look inward was to be Buddha." This mentally active race was suddenly told that "if the mind does nothing, holds nothing, observes nothing, and aims at nothing," there will be no difference between

this life and the Nirvana. The lure of the beyond was for the first time presented to those who for several thousand years had devoted their energies to studying how to live here and now. The devil entered and tempted them to barter their veritable kingdom of earth for a problematical kingdom of heaven.

How was it possible that such a catastrophe could happen?

As long as the Han dynasty held before the people the teaching and exemplary living of the classics, there was little danger that the pragmatic realism of China could be shaken by the mystical abstractions of the Hindu mind. But the rifts in the Chinese lute were twofold. The rule of the sages was imposed entirely from above and was incapable of the development of a popular expression. The Confucian system was too objective, too intellectual, and too severe to be understood directly by the masses, and could be conveyed to them with sufficient clarity only when a strong and beneficent government made tangible for its subjects the advantages of such teachings. "In nourishing the people, it was kind, and in ordering the people, it was just," but it deliberately took over the task of thinking for the people, and it discouraged when it did not actually forbid them to think for themselves.

Though no country has ever been more socially minded, more concerned for the happiness and welfare of its citizens, than China, the adequate protection of its people was possible only when the reins of government were securely held. And this could never indefinitely be the case; for once securely established, a tendency constantly developed in every dynasty to become too poised, too confident of its structure, too little given to those interrogations which in all human endeavor are the surest indication of life and strength. The philosophic principles gradually lost their dynamic power, because their vitality was not renewed through new applications in political and social fields. All political activity became apathetic, and the accumulating inertia of the government

finally brought about its own destruction. This was the history of the reign of the Hsiâs, of the Shangs, of the Chous, and again of the Hans.

Left without material protection or spiritual guidance during such crises, the populace turned elsewhere for guidance; and just as during the *débâcle* of the House of Chou, they absorbed great masses of Tartar superstitions,[1] so the breaking up of the Han Empire into petty rival states again weakened the faith of the unthinking multitude in Heaven's Bright Ordinances, and made them a prey to such Buddhist theories as retribution in an after life, and to its many other emotional conceptions that were keyed much closer to the needs of the limited mentality than was the austere philosophy of China.

The Buddhist invasion was therefore parasitical upon the situation which the objective thinking of China had created, and the very fact that Buddhism met a great need for popular thinking had its disastrous effects upon the history of that religion among the Chinese. The Hinayana, or Lesser Vehicle, which embodies the lofty ethical teachings of the Buddha himself, was too exacting in its demands, and the Mahayana, or Greater Vehicle, with its intricate metaphysics, was far too speculative for popular use. In their stead arose a very simple worship of one of the lesser Buddhas, called Amitābha, and his attendant Bodhisattwas, Ta-shih-chih and Kuan-yin, Goddess of Mercy. It was the mission of Amitābha to secure the salvation of all beings and to establish a heavenly region of the blessed, called by one of the two earliest sects of this religion Ching-t'u, or "Pure Land," by the other Hsi T'ien, or "Western Heaven." Faith alone was necessary to achieve these Elysian Fields, and the mere repetition of the name of the great Amitābha would insure the salvation of the direst sinner. A more completely stultifying emotionalism than this can scarcely be conceived, but its promises were as

[1] See page 19 and footnote.

great as its demands were slight, and Amidism, as this distorted Buddhism is called, swept through the country with an irresistible force. So successful was it in undermining the influence of the higher forms of Buddhism that as early as the tenth century, though divided into five different sects, its victory over all rival orthodox beliefs was complete. The Bodhisattwa Kuan-yin, embodiment of love and compassion, through whose benign intercession Paradise could also be gained, had now come to equal Amitābha himself in the regard of the masses; with a kindly and appealing mythology made visual in innumerable stone statues, this faith was bound to absorb the vast multitudes who in all countries and all ages never develop beyond the fetishistic level.

VIII

It is necessary to keep in mind the outlines of Amidism because to one of its branches, namely the Ch'an sect,[1] is given the credit by all writers[2] on the subject of Chinese pictorial art for the development of landscape painting in China. This faith was brought from India A.D. 526, when Bodhidharma, who is styled the twenty-eighth Indian and first Chinese Patriarch, landed at Canton.[3]

Let us now consider the form in which this doctrine first arrived. What the Patriarch most particularly decried was the constant searching of the sutras for spiritual insight; he insisted that the human heart was the sole guide to true sanctity, and contemplation and introspection were the means, so to speak, of becoming acquainted with one's self. When he spoke of the heart, he meant not the physical organ but a mystical entity which, in spite of its vagueness, constituted the world's only reality. Through its contemplation alone

[1] Ch'an, *i.e.*, "contemplation," called "Zen" by the Japanese.

[2] See especially the works of Fenollosa and Binyon.

[3] Edkins, *Chinese Buddhism*, pp. 155–160.

could the vision of Buddha be attained. Nor was this contemplation the severe and ordered process which the Mahayana prescribed, but a purely intuitive self-concentration that began nowhere and ended in nothing. As all knowledge came from this mystical "heart," intellect and reason were both nonexistent.

Nagarjuna, the most important founder of the Mahayana School, had, as early as the third century A.D., eliminated the external world as a reality. But Bodhidharma carried Buddhist subjectivity to such a point that a veritable stupor comes over the mind as one tries to read the few works that are attributed to him. These writings are not numerous, as he was opposed to all literary pursuits; and one of the worst influences which his teachings had was the destruction of learning in the monasteries, and the consequent condemnation of innumerable monks to a totally inactive and useless existence.[1]

To the Liang Emperor Wu-ti, in answer to his question, "What is true merit?" Bodhidharma is said to have replied: "It consists in purity and enlightenment, depth and completeness, and in being wrapped in thought while surrounded by vacancy and stillness. Merit such as this cannot be sought by worldly means."[2] In order to live up to this doctrine, the Patriarch sat himself down before a blank wall and remained there in contemplation for nine years. Even the achieving of merit through good works, important in early Chinese Buddhism, was eliminated in so passive a system, and the aim of such efforts, the attaining of reward in an after life, also became unimportant. No reality, no action-content; surely a more subjective philosophy can scarcely be achieved, and certainly none more disdainful of the contributions of nature to the solution of life's problems.

Nevertheless by the middle of the T'ang dynasty the adherents of the Ch'an

[1] Edkins, *Chinese Buddhism*, p. 86. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

sect had discovered that the world was real, and under the influence of the Tao, had learned to see nature in a state of constant evolution.

What, then, was the force which, metaphorically speaking, turned the head of Bodhidharma away from its concentration on nothingness, away from its absorption with itself? What forced the eyes of Buddhism out toward a contemplation of the universe and its wonders? It came to China wrapped in a mystic chrysalis of introspection, and not until it had encountered the ancient Chinese thought did it gradually awaken to a realization of the importance of environment. From the most extreme example of subjectivity that accepted consciousness as its only reality, China made an objective mentality that began to observe and to love the external world as she for three thousand years had observed and loved it.

Not only did the Ch'an sect turn what, with the "wall-gazing Brahman" in mind, can so justly be called a right about face, but Buddhism as a whole had adopted from its earliest appearance the very habits of life and the most characteristic institutions of China. For the Buddhists who, in their monasteries or in more secular groups, lived by preference among the solitude and beauty of wooded mountain sides were but carrying on the traditions of the ancient hermit life of the Taoist recluses. The "White Lotus Club,"[1] for example, a small group of Buddhists who, under the leadership of the priest Hui-yüan, retired during the fourth century to a remote and secluded life, was but an echo of "The Seven Wise Men of the Bamboo Grove," a group of extreme Taoists who had fled the haunts of man a century before. In fact, Hui-yüan, who was the founder of the "Pure Land" sect of Amidism, had been a Taoist before his conversion and simply carried over into his Buddhist life the habits of mind and body that had been fixed in him by his Taoist training.

[1] See page 93.

It may be objected—it has in fact been asserted by Buddhist scholars—that India also had its hermits, and that the hermit idea was brought to China with Buddhism. They go so far as to say that the withdrawal from community life of the "Four Hoary Men" in the third century B.C. is proof positive of an early Buddhist influence in China whose origin cannot be traced![1] But these good people seem not to know the story first told by Chuangtzŭ (fourth century B.C.), and repeated at length by Huang-fu Mi (third century A.D.) in his "Lives of the Scholar-recluses," concerning the Emperor Yao (*c.* 2356 B.C.) and his great friends, the hermits or scholar-recluses (Kao-shih), Hsü Yu and Tsao Fu. Weary of ruling and eager to retire to a more peaceful existence among the hills, Yao offered his throne to Hsü Yu. This sage only roared with laughter and asked his Imperial Majesty whether he took him for a fool. When Hsü Yu recounted the emperor's request to Tsao Fu, the latter, highly indignant at the idea of exchanging the beauty of a hermit life for the onerous weight of a crown, demanded of Hsü Yu, "Why be friendly with such a fellow?" and proceeded to a neighboring stream to wash the ear that had heard so nefarious a suggestion. With this amusing tale do the Chinese throw into their almost prehistoric period the whole Taoist ideal of seeking the perfect life amidst the suggestive surroundings of nature. Self-isolation in India was practised with the negative idea of avoiding the contaminating touch of man, whereas in China the aim was the poetic and positive one of seeking a contact with what they later termed the Tao; and this positive seeking, this affirmation rather than mere renunciation of life, is what the Buddhists learned in China.

Living, then, as the ancient Taoists had lived and still continued to live, the new devotees of the "Pure Land," or of the Ch'an sect, preserved their interest

[1] See Mayers' *Reader's Manual*, Pt. II, No. 83.

in externality, and whatever contribution such Buddhists made to the development of Chinese landscape art was but a continuation of the indigenous regard for nature. To think of that feeling as being essentially Buddhist is not to recognize its power or profundity; for such depth of feeling could never have been suddenly evolved from a new-found faith, but could only have been attained by the slow and cumulative growth that China's history reveals. The rhythms which the Chinese had learned through long ages of astral observation were not to be speedily forgotten under the onslaughts of a subjective religion; and it is a heartening thing to see that the victory in this struggle remained ever with the sane, objective naturalism of China as against the mystic mentality of India.

If, indeed, within the tenets of Buddhism there had been a force that turned the mind out toward a realization of nature's wonders, why did it not develop the art of landscape painting in other countries, in India itself, for example? To this, Japan is the obvious reply; but the Japanese were fortunate in receiving much of their Buddhism after the Chinese mentality had put its mark upon it, acquiring as they did with the Zen, as they call the Ch'an sect, not only one of their strongest religious movements, but much of their civilization with its noble continuation of Chinese painting, Chinese poetry, and Chinese philosophy. The development would seem too self-evident for serious analysis, had not Fenollosa, through an admirable but misleading fidelity to his Buddhist teachers, seen the problem with such bias and such persuasiveness as to warp for many years the occidental understanding of China's great cultural contributions.

The form, then, of Chinese Buddhism was as much the product of their ancient naturalistic attitude toward life as were the ceremonies of Confucius and the evolutionary theories of Taoism, or, to turn to more material things, the Chou bronzes, the jades of Han, and lastly, in time if not in grandeur, the landscapes of T'ang and Sung.

IX

THERE remains only to be decided what the counter-influence of Buddhism may have been on the Chinese. Did it in any sense affect the integration of their religious and political thought, their careful adjustment of life to the environment which the picture of China's early culture presented? The idea suggests itself immediately that the unity of the ancient state, in which the emperor represented for all of his subjects the sacredness of Heaven itself, was gone forever, and politically there is no question that Buddhism divided and weakened the country and made it an easier prey for the ever threatening Tartar hordes. The dualistic conception of the universe which Buddhism brought with it also had its disastrous effect upon the mental integrity which the Chinese valued so highly. Such theories as that of metempsychosis gained a strong popular hold, superimposing upon their physical conception of the evolutionary process an elaborate system for the evolution of souls with which the Chinese had never, up to this point, confused their thinking. Soon after the spread of Buddhism in China, its ritual was borrowed and imposed upon Taoism, thus hastening the destruction of that philosophy by debasing it into a formal religion and encouraging all its weaker, popular phases at the expense of its noble contributions to human thought. But the effects of all these disruptive influences came after the time in which we are interested, and cannot be discussed here. What we must try to confine ourselves to, is the political and philosophical picture of China before the time of Li Lung-mien and after the time when Buddhism, as an organized institution, had developed into a factor to be reckoned with.

It must above all things be kept in mind that, though Buddhism had an enormous following among the masses, it ever remained an intellectual study with most of the *literati*. To the Chinese scholar Buddhism represented a new

and in many ways interesting metaphysical system which his unprejudiced mind found worthy of careful consideration; but the patterns of thought which two thousand years of custom had established for him remained unshaken. It is difficult for us who look upon religions as mutually exclusive methods for the saving of the soul to realize that a Confucian remained Confucian as far as the practical living of life was concerned, no matter how much of truth he recognized in other systems of thought. He fought gross superstitions which seemed to him to stultify the popular mind; but it is essentially to his credit that the serenity of his mood remained untouched, for the persecutions of Buddhism, of which we hear so much in the T'ang dynasty, were rarely on religious grounds. The broad-minded Confucian tolerance never opposed the spread of the new religion until its beliefs and institutions became a political menace to the state. Encouraged by weak emperors who hoped to sit more securely enthroned by pandering to this new faith of the people, strengthened by the temporary weakness during the Wei and Liang dynasties of the ancient rule of the sages, Buddhism had grown apace, and the monastic system which had sprung up soon after its first appearance in China had developed to such enormous dimensions that the practical and social-minded Confucians objected to supporting in idleness so many people who should be tilling the fields, rearing progeny, and otherwise carrying on the interests of the community. Especially were they concerned lest the continuity of the family, the very heart of the Confucian state, should be threatened by the Buddhist ideal of celibacy. The religious persecutions, in other words, were purely social in character and, after they had taken place, left none of the animosity and bitterness that were aroused and perpetuated by the religious conflicts of the occidental world.

It is, perhaps, easiest to understand the mental picture of the period if we turn for a moment to the consideration of actuality. When, in A.D. 627, the

second T'ang Emperor, T'ai-tsung, had crushed the armies of the Hsüng-nu aggressors and once more forced obedience and order upon the rebellious and confused empire, there was as great a revival of the classics as in the time of the Hans. Although a Confucian, he gave the same consideration and freedom to the Buddhists, and lent an equally willing ear both to the Zoroastrian and the Nestorian priests who came to his court in the early seventh century. So real was his interest in Buddhism that he encouraged the priest Yüan Chuang to go to India in A.D. 629 for the purpose of supplementing the limited number of sutras which China then possessed. While thus demonstrating his tolerance, he made great social reforms based on Confucian doctrine, and increased the familiarity with the ancient classics by founding an academy for the study of literature and by reinstituting the ancient civil service examinations which every aspirant to public office or to the standing of a scholar had to take.

The importance of these examinations can scarcely be underestimated if we consider how the whole life of the Chinese was thus concentrated until a very recent date upon the study of the ancient texts. As a rule it is impossible to find the date of a Chinese painter's or scholar's birth, but the date when he passed his final examination, the Chin-shih, is seldom omitted. This was the moment when life really began, and the first memories of his childhood must have been the preparation for this great event. It was the emperor's means of keeping in touch with his subjects, for his closest contact with his independent and liberty-loving people was through the examiners under whose observation at some time or other the whole of China's cultivated manhood had to pass. The scholars may or may not have had an interest in Buddhism, but upon their knowledge of China's ancient laws depended their status among their fellow-men. Foreign metaphysics might have many points

of interest, but the business of life remained closely associated with the specifically Chinese mode of thought. Thus does T'ai-tsung's reign become a new cornerstone in the structure of China's cultural history, for the fact that he gave the state a strong organization based upon Confucian law made possible the tolerance which as a rule prevailed for the next five centuries, while the three different philosophical systems existed side by side with a constantly varying proportion of adherents. The emperor himself was the best type of Chinese heroic character, a wise and enlightened ruler, a great general, a student of the arts and literature, open-minded because he did not fear for his own firmly founded convictions, examining all things with candor and discrimination, furthering and assimilating what in them he saw of merit, but looking back to the past of his own people for that which would most surely serve those who were to follow.

Since, as has been illustrated, the Chinese clung resolutely, throughout the Buddhist invasion and hundreds of years after Buddhism had become nothing but a half-remembered formula, to the Confucian forms for the conduct of life, is it not right to suppose that the mental processes behind these forms remained the same? The basis for their beliefs, their astronomical and natural researches, was dimmed in the T'ang dynasty to the point where the Hindus, who had much later learned their science,[1] ventured temporarily to criticize the Chinese calendar; but the immediate effects of that early delving into the physical mysteries guided them still with the unquestioned and invincible force of all those things whose roots lie deep in the rich and productive soil of our good earth.

In Buddhism the objective Chinese met what, in its origins at least, was the most powerfully constructed exposition of the subjective point of view,

[1] See De Saussure's articles, *T'oung Pao*, Vols. IX, X.

that type of mentality which seeks to find the wisdom of the world by occupying itself exclusively with its own functions; Buddhism attempted to sever the relations of its adherents with the material universe and, inasmuch as Chinese art rested upon the objective philosophy of the race, Buddhism threatened that art at its very foundation. It was a severe trial, and yet the most appropriate one that could have come to the Chinese in order that, through this juxtaposition of diametrically opposite points of view, they might achieve a new and strengthened love for the broad, the powerful, the contented mentality of their ancestors.

X

WHAT was the history of Confucianism and Taoism during this era of Buddhist expansion? Coincident with the spread of Buddhism, after the fall of the Han dynasty, came a revival of Taoism that was infinitely more important for the intellectual development of China. In fact, during the third and fourth centuries, Buddhism had to content itself with its numerous converts in the north, where Confucian scholars were too disorganized to oppose it, and in the west, where the Tartars welcomed the Indian culture which the Buddhist priests brought with them; for in the south, where Taoism held its sway, Buddhism could at first make no progress.[1] Here the cultured classes were engrossed with the teachings of Laotzŭ and Chuangtzŭ, while the populace was entranced with the magic side of Taoism that had been steadily growing in influence throughout the Han dynasty.

This sudden outburst of all forms of Taoism was a natural and sharp reaction against the decadent formalism of Han. Confucian theory having once more become too dogmatic, the Taoists again asserted the principles of change

[1] Edkins, *Chinese Buddhism*, pp. 91, 92.

and the value of the individual to this process. They raised their old cry that all conventions are false;[1] that only disorder and anarchy can result when speculative thinking is allowed to dominate natural law and natural living. By a new appeal to reality and by a fresh statement of the doctrine of individuality they injected a new impulse into contemporary thinking, which resulted in an as yet unparalleled activity in the fields of literary and pictorial art.

The manner in which Taoism and Confucianism interacted from the Han period onward to inspire and preserve the creative intelligence of China is the story that can be gleaned from a consideration of the work of Li Lung-mien. Both systems of thought battled for and against each other, and both were contending at the same time with the weaknesses inherent in each. It is at this point and with this dramatic unfolding as its major theme that the history of Li Lung-mien takes over the mental and artistic history of his race.

Under the leadership of the House of T'ang, Confucianism once more demonstrated its inner recuperative forces; for when all is said, the continuity of China was insured only by the latent power of this system to revive itself. To Buddhist, and especially Ch'an asceticism, so contradictory to the whole trend of Chinese life, it opposed a new austerity, and a simplicity that aimed not at abnegation but at achievement. It reaffirmed its old principles and revived its art and literature, but modified considerably its practice in political and intellectual affairs. It could reckon no better than in the Han and earlier dynasties with its inherent tendency to become overpoised in intellectual detachment; but centuries of constant study of the ancient texts had greatly multiplied the number of scholars, writers, and artists who supported, while they ornamented, the new official regime. Though it could never learn to

[1] *Chuangtzŭ*, Chap. 2.

lower its own standards through an artificial popularization, it could elevate to its standard so many valuable adherents that the new supremacy lasted for almost seven hundred years, if we except the fifty years (A.D. 907–960) that it took to change the House of T'ang for that of Sung.

During the eleventh century, in which Li Lung-mien's life mostly falls, Taoism was waning and Buddhism, except as a popular movement, was effete. As Edkins[1] states it: "Buddhism had had its trial and been found wanting," and a new Confucianism was rising which frankly and liberally borrowed what best suited its theories from both the other systems. So broad and so sure of their hold did the Confucians become that many books were written to prove that all three faiths were essentially one and the same thing; but hand in hand with this eclecticism went a strong revival of scientific and philosophic research which resulted in a new and elaborately commentated edition of the Confucian texts and the ancient historical annals. The original works of this period were largely based upon the Yî Ching, or "Book of Changes," the cornerstone of Chinese antiquity. Chu Hsi (A.D. 1130–1200) was perhaps the greatest of these Sung philosophers who helped thus to link their age intimately with the trend of classic thought; but the way had been prepared for him by such brilliant Confucian teachers as Chou Tun-i (A.D. 1017–1073), Chang Tsai (A.D. 1020–1067), and the brothers Ch'êng Hao (A.D. 1032–1085) and Ch'êng I (A.D. 1033–1107). In preparation for this renaissance, the work done in other fields, such as that of Li Lung-mien, had been of not a little help. There were many different types of Confucianism, as a closer examination of this period will reveal, nor was there any sharp antithesis between the Confucians and the Taoists, for though both the political and philosophic aspects of life had had at times extremists in their ranks, most of the

[1] Edkins, *Chinese Buddhism*, p. 325.

scholars of the Sung period thought along both channels, and we actually find men who, though bitterly opposed to each other politically, were the best of friends "among the rocks and streams" because they could always fall back upon their common Taoist thoughts and emotions as a basis for a continued affection. The momentous revival of Taoism and the reorganization of Confucianism after the Han dynasty is so clearly traced in the account of Li Lung-mien's life that it may be left for later consideration; the Buddhist influence, on the other hand, had to be outlined, because Li Lung-mien emphasizes it so little and occidental critics have emphasized it so over-much.

XI

This cultural continuity in China was mirrored at all times in a many-sided productivity. Though it was occasionally submerged by the waves of social conflict, the artistic development in China from the nine sacred bronzes of the Hsiâs to the latest Sung and Ming landscape is as unbroken in conception and execution as is their philosophical, social, and political history; and all are expressions in different directions of that ancient and undying naturalistic philosophy through which they bound the ages each to each. The form of that expression in the domain of art was as evolutionary as were their beliefs, nor did it fail to profit by all foreign influences to which at different periods it was subjected. The Greeks and many other western nations sent their contribution in the Han dynasty, Persia and Khotan under the early T'angs, and Buddhism not only furthered these later contacts but, in its absorption by the Chinese mentality, may have brought new artistic vigor as the absorption of a foreign race brings physical vigor. But the spirit that dominated was the serene, earth-taught, earth-loving spirit of the great Chinese race with its

never forgotten lessons of continuity, objectivity, productivity, and craftsmanship.

When a T'ang or Sung artist depicted a landscape, he was not celebrating a religion that denied the reality of the outer world, but he, like his many predecessors, was telling the philosophical history of his people, repeating the ancient story of the Chinese belief in the great beauty and the profound significance of nature in every manifestation. When he painted rocks and trees and wide bodies of water, he saw in them the evolution of life and of the world; he felt the eternal in the actual; he was painting his love of the past, his belief in the present, his hope for the future. He was reproducing in the subtlest artistic medium that only their fine belief in technique could ever have achieved, the deepest, the longest-tried faith in reality that the world has ever seen. The continuity and beauty of environment, the wisdom of an adjusted behavior, the need of an exquisite technique both for living and for the expression of life, these, I think, are the main tenets of Chinese art and philosophy in the T'ang and Sung dynasties as at all times.

Chinese art thus presents itself as racial rather than individual, as a formidable continuity which linked an eleventh century painter, such as the one we are about to study, with the very dawn of his civilization, lending to his art the accumulated wisdom and power of the centuries as well as the serenity that comes from such unified and unbroken development. Small wonder, then, that he in turn devotes his thought and his skill to the glorification of that harmonious growth of which he feels himself exalted to be a part. When it is so impersonally interpreted, art becomes another vehicle for maintaining in the human intelligence that same continuity which Confucius had observed in organic life and, through ancestor-worship and ceremonial, had attempted to establish for the social structure. It becomes as truly as any one of these

a preservative adjunct of the state, was, as we shall see, consciously that in the case of Li Lung-mien; and just as art served tradition, so tradition gradually enfolded the progress of art from every point of view.

Therefore, it is more accurate, more explicative, to think of Chinese art as Confucian both in its origin and its development than to associate it, because of the many external and often more immediate influences, with the Buddhist or even the Taoist religion. The former brought its wealth of new material, and the latter, with its basic relationship to Confucian principles and its constant maintenance of renewed contacts with nature, was of great value as a continuous source of fresh inspiration; but the fundamental difference between Chinese art and all other arts lies in this expression of a racial rather than of an individual point of view, in its unbroken evolution deliberately maintained, and in its conscious effort to preserve the ideals and traditions of the nation. These aims are not Taoist—still less are they Buddhist; but they exhibit in full measure that ancient wisdom of China which, out of deference to the man who restated it, we call Confucianism.

To judge, then, of the greatness of Li Lung-mien or of any Chinese artist, we must, from a study of his life and his works, decide in what measure he can be said to have forwarded these obligations, and to what extent his main purpose was enriched by contributory sources of inspiration. We must try to understand clearly the light in which this cultural heritage appeared to him, and what the different artistic reflections of this illumination of his mind may have been. If we can isolate these various influences in the case of a particular artist, we shall then be in a position to define in general the exact function of aesthetics in their social structure and the nature of its plastic results.

THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE OF LI LUNG-MIEN

I

LI LUNG-MIEN must have loved obscurity as much as his illustrious predecessor Laotzŭ; for the historians that narrate at length the lives and deeds of his contemporaries are able to give but a meagre account of the man who is acknowledged by all of them as the greatest painter of his day. The records are uniformly respectful, very vague, and at times even inaccurate, so that it is unsafe to accept their statements without checking them in the autobiographical material which the catalogue of his paintings affords. When their innumerable repetitions have been eliminated and their facts assembled and verified, we have but a misty outline of an heroic figure; we see a man of "lofty aims and ideals" who had a "transcendent way of living," but what the aims and ideals may have been we do not know, nor are we much nearer to visualizing the transcendent manner of his life. To discern these with clarity we must resort to a study of his works, fortunately preserved for us in American collections, and to the descriptions, dates, and commentaries of his paintings as we find them scattered about in ancient catalogues and treatises on art.

For when, as with the Chinese, the artist's function is not confined to his expression of his sense of fact, but includes the recording, in the noblest possible manner, of fact itself, when the artist thus becomes, in addition, an eclectic historian, it is fair to assume that those deeds and beliefs of his race which appeared to him as most worthy of commemoration will reflect to a great extent the spiritual image of his own countenance. Not only can we apprehend the direction of his ideals through his choice of subject, but happily we find many of the paintings accompanied by essays and poems, giving exact and varied information, written sometimes by the artist himself, more often by

one of the small group of literary men that were his most intimate associates; often, too, the paintings were done as illustrations of the text by which they are accompanied, ancient philosophic or poetical dissertations that reveal to us what this artist venerated most highly amongst their rich store of wisdom and beauty. From this material, from the paintings with their inscriptions as we still have them, and from the much more voluminous records of paintings we have never seen, we can reconstruct, in a measure, his relationship to the religious, political, and intellectual interests of the times, the standards which he set himself and his family, his mode of living, and the kind of friends he preferred, whether among his contemporaries or among that shadowy host of long dead heroes whose memory was so real to him, whose influence so immediate, that they must surely have vied in his affections with the living presences by which he was surrounded.

And since his pictures are of all ages and all varieties of subject, since he painted with the same love the incidents of his intimate surroundings and those of the grandest and most heroic moments of the past, we derive as a by-product of our interest in Li Lung-mien the very flavor of Chinese life. Its frailties are portrayed with a humorous understanding and a broad-minded acceptance of the weaker side of human nature; and as he acknowledges weakness, so, also, without prejudice he recognizes strength wherever he may find it. He makes no pleas of a political or religious nature, but depicts whatever he finds of beauty and of truth with the impartiality of one who is beyond good and evil. Since many of his paintings, like those of all Chinese artists, are copies, the comprehensive study of one man's work gives us something all-embracing, something typical, so that in knowing intimately the work of a universal genius like Li Lung-mien, one may accurately appreciate who, as a whole, the Chinese painters were, and what, in the main, Chinese painting really was about.

II

THE period of Li Lung-mien's adult life (1070–1106) was a particularly trying one for the scholars and statesmen of the day. From a military point of view these years were comparatively peaceful; the annual subsidy of silk and silver which had been paid the Khitan hordes was still having its tranquilizing effect, and the power of the Chin or Golden Tartars[1] had not yet developed sufficiently to disturb the equilibrium of the empire. The grandeur of the Sung dynasty was unquestioned, nor had the nation become aware of that inner weakness which was so soon to cause the loss of half the dominion to the irresistible force and numbers of its northern foes. If life was pleasantly free of military aggression, it was, politically speaking, the scene of violent combat, for the young and energetic Emperor Shên-tsung (1068–1085), upon coming to the throne, immediately appointed as premier the great Confucian reformer Wang An-shih (1021–1086), who had for many years been struggling to overturn the economic organization of his country. His ideas were of a sort to challenge the ancient independence of spirit; he advocated strict government control of commerce, industry, and agriculture, with the resulting necessity to fix wages and prices; he urged a land-tax graduated according to the fertility of the soil, an old age pension, unemployment insurance, and a minimum wage. All these ideas, which seem so modern to us, were strictly in accord with Confucian tenets and had in part been promulgated as far back as the Han dynasty; but they implied strong centralization of the government powers, called for a much heavier taxation, and challenged the deeply ingrained Chinese belief that man is freest and happiest when he is least aware of the emperor's existence. The entire official world was sharply divided into

[1] See De Mailla's *Histoire de la Chine*, Vol. VIII, for an account of the Tartar movements. Also Parker's *A Thousand Years of the Tartars*, Bk. VII.

two bitterly hostile camps; both parties were honestly striving in true Confucian spirit for the welfare of the people, but differed as to whether greater central control with higher taxes or the old loosely organized government with its mild levies were the better system. The opposition was headed by the eminent historian Ssŭ-ma Kuang, and had in its ranks the greatest scholars and literary men of the period. Among them were three of Li Lung-mien's closest friends, the poet Su Tung-p'o, who was the intellectual leader of the period, his almost equally talented brother Su Chê, and the essayist and critic Huang Shan-ku. As such a powerful opposition too effectually hampered his efforts at reform, Wang An-shih used drastic methods to attain his ends, and in 1070–71 had all his enemies either banished or removed from office, with the result that the empire was temporarily denuded of most of its intellectual strength. For six years he strove to put his theories into effect; but in 1074 the very populace for which he labored murmured against him, and having lost the confidence of the emperor, he was obliged in his turn to leave the court for the province of Chiang-ning (Nanking), of which he was made the governor. The banished anti-reform party now began to return to the capital, and from 1076 until long after Wang An-shih's death in 1086, political history consisted of the rapid alternation of the two parties, with the repeated banishment of the side that was temporarily the weaker. No man was certain of his position from one day to the next, and any moment might see his removal to some distant province. Often the political situation was used to serve personal enmities, and so acute did the vindictiveness become that the Emperor Hui-tsung, in 1102, was persuaded by the reform party to erect a stone tablet at one of the main entrances of the palace on which were cut the names of its most powerful enemies, one hundred and twenty "bad officers" of all grades, among them Li's friends, Tung-p'o and Huang Shan-ku. All the intellectuals of China were exiled,

their works were burned, and the possessor of so much as a line of their writings was severely punished.

Li Lung-mien had passed the civil service examination (Chin-shih) in 1070, and consequently was in government employ while this political battle raged, but his office was a very minor one and did not oblige him to take sides in the questions of the day. During all the turmoil there is not the slightest trace of partisanship in his conduct, and in spite of the hatred that existed between the two factions, we find him on the friendliest terms with the leaders of both. His was the type of mentality that preferred to hold itself aloof from the political vexations of the moment; but the integrity of his character must have been utterly unassailable if, in the heat of such a life-and-death struggle, he could remain sufficiently above the rancor and the slander to retain, as he did, the affectionate esteem of all concerned.

Of his friendship with the anti-reform leaders, Tung-p'o and Huang Shan-ku, we shall speak at length later; it is enough to say here that their deep mutual respect lasted as long as their lives, was stronger than banishment, stronger even than death. In spite of this close relationship with members of the opposition, there was great sympathy between Li, the artist and man of letters, and Wang An-shih, premier, politician, and social economist. Though the venerable statesman must have been by almost thirty years Li Lung-mien's senior, he wrote poems in praise of Li and did him the signal honor of paying him a visit, an especially noteworthy act in this instance, as Wang was notoriously contemptuous of his fellow-men. It is recorded in the Hsüan-ho catalogue that "Wang An-shih in selecting his friends gave his approval very grudgingly. Yet he went to visit Kung-lin in the Chung Mountains [Kiangsu], and when he left, Li wrote four poems to bid him farewell which were much admired by Wang." It is indicative of Li's attitude toward the great minister,

and no doubt the secret of their esteem, that when he paints his portrait, as he did on at least two occasions,[1] he makes no reference to the pomp of position nor to his character of militant reformer, but pictures the statesman off duty as he daily rambled, mounted on a donkey, through the Chung Mountains; or he depicts him travelling yet further on his gentle beast, through the forest-hung hills, as far as the monasteries of Fa-yün and Ting-lin, where, amidst the beauty of the out-of-doors and the peaceful silence of monastic life, he sought to forget the problems and cares of his active existence. On journeys such as these the aged statesman and the young artist felt themselves on common ground, and no doubt it seemed obvious to both that this love of nature might inspire one man to construct a new social system, while it led another to depict with brush and ink the eternal truths that spoke to him in every rock and rill.

Just how old Li Lung-mien was when he passed his official examination in 1070 we do not know, as this is the first of his dates that the biographers thought worthy of record, but judging from the average age at which the scholars took the examinations, it is safe to say that he was at that time at least twenty-five. He was born in Shu-ch'êng, the province of Anhui, where his family had long been prominent, because his ancestors for generations had been literary men. It is equally true that the family must have been wealthy, an item too material to be mentioned by the Chinese scholars, but quite evident from the fact that his father, Hsü-yi, was a collector of paintings and calligraphies, and that Li had an even larger collection of jades, bronzes, and paintings, all of which were very costly even in the Sung dynasty—comparatively speaking, more so than to-day; and again the numerous purchases of land which we find Li and other members of his family making,

[1] Category II, Nos. 66, 67.

with no indication whatever of any remunerative occupations other than government positions which could not have been lucrative, show marked freedom from money cares. He had a brother and a cousin who enjoyed a reputation for scholarship almost equal to his own, the former being known especially for his literary style, the latter for his calligraphy, the three together being often referred to as "the Three Lis of Lung-mien" from the fact that they were all domiciled near Lung-mien Hill, so called from the resemblance of its contour to that of a sleeping dragon.[1]

The name, Li Lung-mien, however, refers always to the artist, an appellation which he chose for himself in honor of his home among the hills; his real name, the one by which he would familiarly be called, was Li Po-shih, the one he faced the world with, Li Kung-lin. Among his favorite signatures is Lung-mien Chü-shih, the scholar-recluse of Lung-mien; for as a Chinese gentleman loves best his leisure, especially after his retirement from public life, so also he loves best the name by which he styles himself when his retirement has been accomplished, or even long before, when he has begun to live in the definite hope of achieving that happy end. Though Li Lung-mien continued in government service until 1100, he purchased his Lung-mien "cottage for retirement" in 1077, as we find him later stating on his painting of that subject;[2] and as early as 1080 and 1081, and possibly earlier though it is not on our records, we find him signing his picture of "Laotzŭ Delivering the Tao Tê Ching,"[3] "Lung-mien Chü-shih Li Kung-lin," and in 1083 on the "Lohans Crossing the Sea," we find another form, "Lung-mien Shan-jên Li Kung-lin," whereby he describes himself as the mountain-loving man of

[1] Category V, No. 6. The name "Li of the Dragon Face" used by Giles and other occidental writers is an incorrect reading of the character "mien" (眠), which means "sleeping," the character "mien" (面), for face, being quite different.

[2] Category V, No. 14. [3] See illustration No. 15.

Lung-mien. Most often, however, he calls himself Chü-shih, or hermit-scholar, a term of Buddhist origin, indicating, during the fourth and fifth centuries, a man well versed in Buddhist laws and principles who has not taken the monastic vows. After the middle of the sixth century Confucian scholars began occasionally to add the title to the cognomens which they invariably gave themselves in later life, this perfectly general use of the suffix coming much in vogue among scholars of the T'ang and especially the Sung dynasties. The term then lost its Buddhistic significance and merely implied that the man who so styled himself wished to indicate that though he lived in the world, he was in no sense of it, that he carried with him into the very market-place such a silence "as should hold him to its revelations" even amidst the affairs of men. From this significance it became a mere title to denote the scholar, and, as the upper classes consisted of scholars, one that was in common use. Li signed his work in an apparently arbitrary manner, and no conclusions as to dates of paintings or other information can be gathered from his signatures, for even the simple Li Po-shih, found on many of the early paintings, was frequently affixed to the products of his old age.

III

Of all the biographical records of Li Lung-mien, the Hsüan-ho Hua-p'u[1] is the most definite in its facts; as it became the basis of many later accounts, its information covers that of practically all other such sources. It lists Lung-mien as a civil officer and then proceeds:

"His father Hsü-yi was at one time recommended to the emperor as worthy of appointment to the Order of Virtuous, Good, and Upright Men. He then served the government in the capacity of Assistant to the Grand Court of Revision and was subsequently

[1] Chap. 7, p. 5 b.

rewarded with the honorary title of the Fourth Grade of the Second Class. He was fond of collecting standard calligraphies and famous paintings. Kung-lin studied all these and, while yet a youth, began to understand the techniques of the ancients in handling the brush. Accordingly his calligraphy, both the text and the semi-running hand, showed the influence of the Chin and Sung [A.D. 265–479] styles; in painting, especially, he has perhaps been unexcelled and his works have been treasured by the world.

"He was a man of wide learning, critical acumen, and great penetration. When he first took to painting he studied Ku K'ai-chih, Lu T'an-wei, Chang Sêng-yu, and Wu Tao-tzŭ as well as all other works of famous artists of the past. When he had thus enriched his mind, he appropriated all the good points of the old masters, and using them according to his own ideas, founded an entirely new school. Judging from his works, he does not seem to have plagiarized the paintings of his predecessors, but he undoubtedly modelled his style on their strong points. Whenever he came across a painting, ancient or modern, he would make a copy and keep it; therefore his house was full of famous examples of almost every style or school.

"He was especially skilful at figure painting. Any one looking at his human figures would readily recognize whether they came from the royal court, from the official ranks, or from mountain and forest; or whether they were of the common people, of the servile class, or of the official couriers. Their manners, gestures, expressions, their use of limbs and body, the inclination forward or backward, their size and appearance, whether they hailed from the east, west, south, or north, as well as their ability and place in the social scale; he could give each of these attitudes a nice distinction quite unlike the ordinary painters who lend to all figures a monotonous uniformity and make distinctions, if any, between persons of high position and plebeian origin, or between those of attractive and those of hideous appearance, merely by means of the 'thick red and thin black' contrivance.

"Generally speaking, Kung-lin considered the idea as the element of supreme importance and subordinated the composition and the decorative features to it. The commonplace artist might be able to imitate his fine and careful style, but when he used

his careless, rather sketchy and easy manner, they could never approach him. Evidently he had a thorough understanding of the art of Tu Fu in writing poetry and applied it to his paintings. For instance, Tu Fu, in writing a poem on 'Tying up the Fowls,'[1] did not concentrate on 'the loss or gain of the fowls and insects,' but on the moment when the poet stands against the balcony on the hill, with his eyes fixed in contemplation upon the cold river; similarly Kung-lin, in painting a picture of T'ao Ch'ien's [Yüan-ming] 'Homeward Let Me Turn,'[2] did not lay much stress on Tao's 'field, garden, pine, and chrysanthemums,' but on the moment when 'he composes poetry beside the clear flowing water.' Again, Tu Fu wrote a poem deploring the fact that his thatched hut was torn up by the autumn wind. But he did not so much take to heart the ragged condition of his coverlets or the leaks in his hut, as the wretchedness of all poor scholars throughout the world, over whom he would like to extend a vast protecting wing so that he might see their faces grow happy. So too Kung-lin, in making a picture of the Yang-kuan Pass,[3] thought that farewells and outbursts of sorrow were commonplace demonstrations of feeling, and instead of these, he depicted an angler, quietly seated, apparently forgetful of the external world and showing not the least concern over the scenes of sorrow and joy that are being enacted close by. All other works of his were done more or less in the same manner. It rests with the person who is looking at one of his paintings to discover its idea.

"In his novel way of presenting things he was like Wu [Tao-tzŭ], in his love of nature like Wang Wei; that is to say, his painting of the figures in his Buddhavatam̃-

[1] Tu Fu's poem on "Tying up the Fowls" is an admonition to keep the mind beyond all thoughts of the struggle for existence through contemplation of the serener side of nature.

"My servant-lad tied up the fowls to sell them in the market;
Agonized by the fastenings, oh, how they cry in protest!
My family loathe them because they feed upon the ants and insects;
Yet they forget that the fowls, when sold, will also serve as food.
Insects or fowls, why should we become the partisans of either?
Peremptorily, I order the lad to untie the fowls and give them freedom.
Alas! the struggle between fowls and insects can never cease;
And I, leaning against my hill-side balcony, gaze at the cold and silent river."

[2] For this poem see page 142. [3] Category II, No. 70.

saka Council was comparable to that in the fantastic scenes of Wu's Purgatory, and the painting of his homestead in the Lung-mien Hills was not inferior to Wang's picture of his country home. To make these paintings, he abstracted the finest points from the masters of former generations and made them thoroughly his own. Thus it is no wonder that his works are so much above the ordinary. However, a great number of his paintings have had a wide circulation, and everybody can find an opportunity to examine them personally.

"At first Kung-lin was fond of painting horses, generally after the style of Han Kan; a certain priest [Tao-jên] advised him not to make it a practice to paint horses, fearing that some day he might fall into the ways of the horse. Kung-lin heeded the advice and took to painting Taoist and Buddhist objects with even greater skill.

"At one time he had made pictures of the horses in the imperial stables, such as the 'Good Red-Headed Horse' and the 'Brocade Shouldered Steed,' which were presented by the Khotanese of the Western Region. The grooms, fearing that the copies might be spirited away, begged for the pictures and thus it was that Li first got his reputation as a painter of horses.

"When he was holding his official position and living in the capital [K'ai Fêng-fu, Honan], for a period of ten years he never once entered the house of an influential man or one of high rank. Whenever he could absent himself from his official duty, weather permitting, he would sally forth from the city; carrying wine and accompanied by two or three men of his own turn of mind, he would visit famous gardens and shaded forests; then seated on some rock, with flowing water before them, they would feel divinely happy the whole long day. During that period men of wealth and honor that desired to possess some works from his brush often showed him courtesies and expressed a wish to befriend him, but Kung-lin stubbornly maintained his cold reserve and would not return their advances. Yet he never tired of going about with scholars of worth, though they might be perfect strangers to him, and for them he would wield his brush without the least show of reluctance.

"He drew pictures also of ancient objects, such as the jade tablet 'Kuei,' the jade ring

'Pi,' and the like. In doing this he would study the real history of every name with all details so that his representations might show no inaccuracy.

"His official life lasted about thirty years; and during all that time he never even for a day forgot the spell of mountains and forests. Consequently he painted from the pictures stored up in his mind. In old age he was afflicted with rheumatism, but between groans he would still lift his hand and with his finger draw upon his coverlet just as if he were applying a brush. Warned by the members of his family to desist, he would smile, saying: 'This is a bit of old habit that has not yet been swept clean. I do it quite unconsciously.' Such was his fondness for painting.

"When his illness had somewhat lessened, people again importuned him with requests for paintings. Kung-lin sighed and said to them: 'In making my paintings my purpose is like that of the poet who writes a poem, to sing my innermost feelings and to celebrate nature. How is it that people fail to understand this and seek my pictures just for their entertainment?' After this, whenever he made a painting to give away as a present, he would embody in it a bit of warning or advice, his idea being the same as that of Chün-p'ing,[1] who made fortune-telling his business with the purpose of lecturing his clients on the causes of good and bad fortune, hoping thereby to make them do good deeds.

"After his death it was even more difficult to obtain his paintings and some people paid heavily for them in gold and silk. In consequence many tried hard to copy him, or by making paintings in his style, to reap profits from these imitations. People with little knowledge of the art of painting were often taken in, but these forgeries could not escape detection by the sharp eyes of the connoisseurs.

"In official rank he rose to Ch'ao-Fêng-Lang.[2] Then he resigned,[3] and died at home.[4] Even at the present time, scholars and those in official life, through the length and breadth of the land, out of respect for his fame, would not refer to him by his official name.[5] He

[1] Chün-p'ing, *i.e.*, Yen Tsun (first century B.C.), a native of Ch'êng-tu, Ssŭch'uan. He was a gifted scholar who chose to live a secluded life in the Ssŭch'uan hills, earning a modest livelihood through fortune-telling. He wrote a commentary on Laotzŭ which has been preserved only in quoted fragments.

[2] An honorary title of the Second Class, Sixth Grade. [3] A.D. 1100. [4] A.D. 1106. [5] Kung-lin.

was universally known by his by-name,[1] and he also styled himself 'Lung-mien Chü-shih.'

"To sum up the things in which Kung-lin was strongest, we find that his literary style resembled the Chien-an period [A.D. 196–220]; in handwriting his style resembled that of the periods Chin and Sung [A.D. 265–479]; in painting he fully reached the standards of Ku K'ai-chih and Lu T'an-wei; and as to the study of bronze bells, caldrons, and other ancient objects, he showed such an extensive knowledge and powerful memory that he had no equal in his time. Quite recently there came into the possession of Tuan Yi[2] an imperial seal of jade which he presented to the emperor. Nobody could make out what it was, but Kung-lin solved the problem much to the admiration and respect of all the scholars of the day. However, as he remained buried away in the ranks of inferior officers, law and etiquette prevented his name from being heard and thus he has become famous only for his painting. But here we must give the full details of his life.

"His paintings now in the imperial collection number one hundred and seven titles."

The account in the Hsüan-ho Hua-p'u ends with an enumeration and description of these works.

IV

When the chronicler observes that Li Lung-mien's inferior rank kept his fame as a scholar from spreading, he is excusing the limited nature of his information, due no doubt to Kung-lin's modesty and constantly sustained reticence, or the author must have been ultra-Confucian in his thinking, for in the Sung dynasty archaeological knowledge conferred upon its possessor a greater distinction than high government position. It was customary for emperors to appoint a great scholar to any high office; and Li could no doubt have profited by this custom, had he ever desired such rewards.

[1] Li Lung-mien.

[2] Tuan Yi, an unimportant villager whom history mentions only because of the discovery of this jade.

This biography alludes but lightly to the well-known story that Li at some time in his life turned Buddhist and renounced his horse painting for the exclusive portrayal of Buddhist deities. The imperial cataloguers, with the usual catholicity of the Confucian mind, have added Taoist paintings, but as a rule this oft-told tale is supposed to prove conclusively the Buddhist turn of Li's mind; and since this story of Li Lung-mien's conversion (and very little else) has been so often and so credulously repeated in the occidental literature on Chinese art, it may be well to lay the ghost by quoting its originator, the Buddhist priest Hui-hung, a contemporary of Li's, as he tells it in the Lêng-chai Yeh-hua.[1]

"Li Po-shih was skilful in painting horses. In rating his style in this kind of painting, Tung-p'o considered him not below Han Kan. It is comparatively easy to obtain gold in the capital, but to obtain one of Po-shih's horse paintings is almost an impossibility. The Master [Fa-hsiu] chided him one day, saying: 'Po-shih, you ought to be ashamed that you, as a man of the gentry, should permit yourself to be known as a painter. Worse than that, you paint horses! Does your conscience not hurt you?' Indignantly Po-shih retorted: 'I do not see why painting horses should necessarily deprave a man's mind and send him into an evil life-path.' 'Well,' replied the Master, 'now that you have become so proficient in this kind of painting, you will, of necessity, muse day and night upon the nature and form of the horse, and aim at catching its noble expression and spirit. With your whole mind riveted upon this, there can be absolutely no doubt that one day, when the light of your eyes sinks into the earth, you will find yourself in the womb of a horse. Is that not the evil life-path?'

"Greatly startled, Po-shih quite unconsciously stood up from the couch on which he was sitting and asked, 'What can I do to remedy my fault?' The Master then told him to paint nothing hereafter but images of the Kuan-yin Bodhisattwa. Since then his painting of this Bodhisattwa reached the acme of skill. And the nobility and officials of the time gave the Master much credit for his ingenuity and skill."

[1] Bk. VIII, p. 7 b.

Of the ingenuity and skill of the story there is no doubt; it became so convincing, especially after the usual Chinese repetitions, that the simple device of checking it up with fact has never occurred to anybody. Had any one taken this trouble, he would immediately have discovered from the dates on the paintings that this is not history but simply one of those numerous legends which the Chinese have attached to the names of many of their painters.[1] In the catalogue we see that most of Li's famous Buddhist pictures, such as the "White Lotus Club," "Tossing the Patra," and "The Assembly on the Sea," were done as early as 1080 and 1083; and at least one set of Lohan portraits[2] was signed in 1079; on the other hand, several of the horse paintings are dated 1090 or later,[3] a copy of Han Kan's "Training of Horses by the Keeper of the Imperial Stud" having been done[4] as late as 1103. Moreover we have Huang Shan-ku's word for it, in one of his poems, that Lung-mien in his old age was even more skilful in painting horses than in his youth.[5]

From the many dated paintings we can see that Lung-mien's most productive age was from 1080 to 1090, or it may even be possible that he had more the habit of dating his paintings during that decade, but from the comparison of twenty-four dates that seem reliable, it is evident that he painted landscapes as well as Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist subjects in 1081 and 1082; in 1083 and 1084 he does a painting of "horse nature,"[6] together with the Buddhist Lohans' "Assembly on the Sea";[7] in 1085 he illustrates Confucius' "Book of Filial Piety,"[8] and soon thereafter does portraits of all his contemporaries on a picnic in the "Western Garden";[9] in 1086 we find him collaborating with Su Shih on some landscapes[10] and making educational picto-

[1] See pages 231–232. [2] Category III, No. 33. [3] Category II, No. 45. [4] Category I, No. 15.
[5] *Ibid.*, No. 22. [6] *Ibid.*, No. 24. [7] Category III, No. 10.
[8] Category II, No. 13. [9] *Ibid.*, No. 12. [10] Category V, No. 18.

rial descriptions of China's tributary states;[1] in 1087 he paints the royal archers practising on flying horses;[2] in 1088 he does several horse and Buddhist paintings in the same year;[3] and after that the horses seem rather to preponderate, for after 1091, the year in which he does "T'ao Yüan-ming's Inebriation and Sleep,"[4] the only additional dates that are given are those of three horse paintings.[5] Judging from such a pell-mell succession of various subjects, Li felt no mental conflicts arising from his many different interests; and surely the fear of metempsychosis could not have been so real to him as the often repeated and utterly unfounded Buddhist accounts of it would have us believe.

V

If it is not possible to dispose of Li Lung-mien's religious convictions so simply, how are we to place him? To unravel the tortuosities of so complex a mentality as that of a Sung scholar is not an easy task, but it must be attempted before we can grasp the character of his work and its relationship to the daily life of the period. We have always known that Chinese art is the product of three different influences: namely, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism; and surely one of the safest ways of understanding the force and quality of these rival philosophies is to determine how each, at a given period, presented itself to a single individual.

That Li Lung-mien was a very learned Confucian scholar there is no doubt. He is so classified in histories and biographies, but his Confucianism is equally evident from his thirty years of service in government positions, from his many famous illustrations which glorify Confucian texts, and from the por-

[1] Category IV, No. 4. [2] Category I, No. 7. [3] *Ibid.*, Nos. 10, 19, 40. Category III, No. 4.
[4] Category II, No. 63. [5] Category I, Nos. 12, 15. Category II, No. 45.

trayals of historical events that are no less Confucian in spirit. In the second category, the largest division of the catalogue, there are seventy-three numbers—and every one of these celebrates China's historical or philosophical development. The illustrations for the "Book of Filial Piety,"[1] for example, are not more Confucian in their teachings than those for the "Historical Facts concerning the Relations between Emperors and their Subjects"[2] or the many paintings of that philosopher so beloved by all Chinese scholars, T'ao Yüan-ming.[3] For any painting that preserved a record of that which was of value in the past, whether a classic by Confucius himself, or the loyalty that had existed between the Son of Heaven and his subjects, or the literature and mode of life of a fourth century philosopher, or merely the work of some earlier artist, that painting in its purposeful pursuit of a cultural continuity can justly be described as Confucian. For this reason we can so designate the whole of the first, second, and fourth categories, as well as many of the paintings in the religious and landscape divisions of which the incentive or the subject-matter stresses the moral or the hereditary aspect. As Kung-lin's paintings had, according to our quotation from the Hsüan-ho Hua-p'u, "a very wide circulation" and were in some instances[4] "studied in every house and home," he was able to give a greater effectiveness than we now realize to the ideals which he tried to inculcate. That his aim was often frankly didactic, he himself states in a note that accompanies the illustrations for Confucius' "Book of Filial Piety."[5] A friend, who urged him to take up this work, said to him: "If you can depict the facts and show your pictures to the people, they cannot fail to do some good," and Kung-lin adds that thus encouraged he proceeded to the task.

[1] Category II, No. 13. [2] *Ibid.*, No. 8. [3] *Ibid.*, Nos. 23, 73.
[4] *Ibid.*, No. 23. [5] *Ibid.*, No. 13.

Even to-day we cannot read the descriptions of this group of paintings without deeply admiring the traditions of the Chinese and their unceasing efforts to maintain them. It must be emphasized, moreover, that most of these stories which we find Lung-mien illustrating were not recondite historical subjects but the commonest school-book tales that every child could tell. Let us now consider a few of them with some detail.

In his Confucian mood, it is not surprising to find Li Lung-mien's mind occupied with a portrayal of the perfect state,[1] of that blissful period which all the early Confucians carried about in their hearts, when intercourse between the emperor and his subjects was of the freest, when ministers were all wise and loyal, and citizens all happy and contented. It is a subject which contrasts interestingly with the Greek vision as expressed in Plato's "Republic" by the simplicity of its aims and the practical measures suggested for their attainment. In comparisons of this sort we are made to realize how direct the thinking of the Chinese was, and what a superb economy of means characterizes not only the organization of their social structure but every product of their creative activity.

This wonderful simplicity of the Chinese and their determination to hold it always before the nation as the happiest goal is again brought out in the illustrations for the "Odes of Pin."[2] Pin was approximately the modern Sanshui district of Shensi. There the forefathers of the emperors of the Chou dynasty first established their small colony, and founded society upon an agricultural basis. When the young Emperor Ch'êng-wang (1115–1079 B.C.) first succeeded to the throne, he failed to realize the arduous efforts that were needed to gain a livelihood from the soil, and squandered the fruits of the people's labor without the least knowledge of how dearly those fruits had

[1] Category II, No. 9. [2] *Ibid.*, No. 42.

been bought. Thereupon his uncle, the premier Chou-kung, who acted as his guardian during his minority, composed the famous "Odes of Pin," describing the life of an agricultural community, in order to remind the young emperor how his forefathers had worked and struggled to feed and clothe their people and make the Chou dynasty what it then was. Nothing could be homelier than these songs which the premier ordered sung to the young emperor day and night by blind musicians, and nothing gives more beautifully the earthy tang of Chinese classical culture.

Li Lung-mien also painted the familiar story of the scholar Yüan An[1] of the first century A.D., who would not leave his cottage during a heavy snowfall to search for food lest he might be depriving others in a time of such general need. Of even more value in defining the distinctive characteristics of Confucianism is the description of how the virtues of Ch'üeh of Chi were discovered and enrolled in the services of his country.[2] In this portrait, which like most of Li's so-called portraits serves to embody a moral idea, he praises what is ever one of the sublimest virtues to the Chinese, a quality that lies at the very root of their thought and life, the cultivation and the continual observation of the forms of ceremonious courtesy that one human being owes to another. "Once upon a time," the story begins—only what follows is not a fairy-tale, but a no less beautiful historical fact—"an officer of the Chin Dukedom [678–376 B.C.] was sent on a foreign mission. When he was travelling through the district of Chi, he saw Ch'üeh of the house of Hsi hoeing in the field, while his wife was coming toward him with his meal. But the circumstance that struck the officer most strongly was that the husband and wife received each other with the utmost respect; each treated the other like a guest of honor. The officer persuaded Ch'üeh to go back with him to the

[1] Category II, No. 72. [2] *Ibid.*, No. 3.

court and said to the duke: 'Respect is a repository of all virtues. A man who knows how to respect others, proves beyond question that he is a man of virtue; and as it is by virtue that the people are to be governed I recommend that Your Highness give him a position in the service of the dukedom.' The duke made Ch'üeh an officer of the lower division of the army and later created him the lord of his native district Chi; he was then known as Chi Ch'üeh." Ceremony being the foundation of good government, a man such as this one who felt deeply the rules of human intercourse would necessarily become an invaluable force in the conduct of affairs of state.

As is natural in any promulgation of Confucian ideals, the emperors are much extolled, not, however, as ponderous examples of perfection but as human beings who, though they rose at times to heights of courage and wisdom, were not without their lighter moods, their humor, and their frailties. Though there are allusions to many, Li Lung-mien's favorites seem to be T'ai-tsung (A.D. 627–650), the first great T'ang emperor and son of the founder of the dynasty, one of the sanest, wisest, most beneficent rulers of any age or country, and Ming-huang (A.D. 712–756), who was as gracious and as irresponsible as his predecessor was forceful and cóntrolled. Quite characteristically T'ai-tsung appears in two paintings[1] in the rôle of conqueror; the first picture sets forth the surrender of his rival Li Mi, Lord of Wei, one of the powerful rulers of the day; the other, a typically Chinese subject, describes the "Covenant at the Pien-ch'iao Bridge," which marked T'ai-tsung's diplomatic victory over the T'ou-Küe, or Turks, when in A.D. 626 they were making under their leaders, Hsieh-li and Tuli, a successful invasion of the newly formed T'ang Empire. The goal of the Turkish leaders was Ch'ang-an, the western capital of the T'ang dominion, and with this in view

[1] Category II, Nos. 26, 41.

they led their forces to the north of the Pien-ch'iao bridge which spanned the river Wei. T'ai-tsung, who had just ascended the throne, rode out to meet the enemy with six of his officers, unaccompanied by any troops. He stopped on the south bank of the river and accosted Hsieh-li, upbraiding him for his violation of their agreement of the year 624. While this parley was going on the Chinese troops were gathering on the plains, and Hsieh-li, greatly frightened by their appearance, immediately asked for an amicable settlement.

Admiration such as this for the man who could achieve a bloodless victory by superior intelligence is always a favorite theme in Chinese literature and art, and many examples of it are found in their earliest history. Neither fear nor distaste for fighting had a part in the psychology of this trait, for no race has fought more bravely or more frequently than they. But always there seems to have breathed from them this deep respect for the mind that can conquer brute force. The explanation of this love of intelligence is obviously implied in their early awareness of the unmodifiable elements in their natural environment. The Chinese race was not dropped from heaven fully armed with this wisdom, but could only have achieved it through the usual human method of trial and error, through a long-drawn-out contest between man and the natural forces by which he found himself surrounded. When they finally acquired the knowledge that the height of human intelligence consists in adaptation to the dictated aspects of life, they developed as a by-product a keen perception of what is not inevitable and the profoundest admiration for the man who could, through his intelligence, conquer the forces of a lower order without descending to their level of behavior. To such a civilization, war was necessarily a return to the brutal or instinctive conduct of life, and though their undeveloped neighbors and their own imperfect conditions often forced them to resort to arms, they were never afraid, as we

are, to honor the man who could avoid such measures. A recourse to primitive methods was and is to them an admission of mental limitations; and since Lung-mien had shown that T'ai-tsung knew how to fight, it was desirable to indicate that he also knew how to avoid it.

Precisely the same theme is celebrated in the picture of "Kuo Tzŭ-yi, riding out by himself, to make the Foreign Invaders of Lu surrender."[1] This was the great general who put the T'ang emperor back upon his throne after the two capitals and the entire court had been captured A.D. 755 by the Khitan Tartar, An Lu-shan. Revolts kept breaking out year after year, and finally, in 765, Kuo Tzŭ-yi found himself confronted by an army of several hundred thousand Uigurs, T'ufans, and other tribes, a force so powerful that he could not possibly meet it with the ten thousand men then under his command. The Uigur commander had formerly been one of his lieutenants, and through diplomatic reminders of their former relationship, Kuo Tzŭ-yi succeeded in shaking the Uigur's allegiance to his new allies. The Uigur demanded an interview with the Chinese general, and Kuo Tzŭ-yi, in the face of all warnings from his son and his officers, unarmed and followed by a few men, rode out to meet the Uigur forces. He was immediately recognized and allowed to approach; and in the ensuing conference he managed to turn the Uigur army against the T'ufans, who, taken unawares, were completely defeated. Thus did Kuo Tzŭ-yi, single-handed, to the good fortune and the eternal delight of his countrymen, ward off the attack of a foreign force that was thirty or forty times larger than the army China could then muster.

The Emperor T'ai-tsung is seen not only in the rôle of general and diplomat, but also as a scholar,[2] this side of his nature having been of equal importance, if not of even greater moment for the development of his dynasty

[1] Category IV, No. 6. [2] Category II, No. 51.

and the empire. It is due to his love of learning and beauty that the Academy, which played so important a part in the history of Chinese culture, was founded in A.D. 621 by the eighteen most representative scholars of the country, whom T'ai-tsung had gathered about him as advisers. Day and night it was their duty to hold themselves in readiness for any conference he might desire, an excellent and long-lived example of that intimacy of contact between the executive and intellectual forces of the country which Confucianism loved to create.

The lighter phase of life, when it is intelligent and graceful, as in the Emperor Ming-huang, patron of all that is beautiful, of the arts, of horses, of architecture, and of gardening, receives no less consideration from Lung-mien than does the sterner character of the admirable T'ai-tsung. It is quite to be expected that we should have a scene of Ming-huang listening to music,[1] for he was the greatest of royal musical amateurs and founded the first school for the study of music and acting. He selected for this purpose several hundred men and girls from the members of his court and organized them into a troupe that was under his personal direction. They were taught in his pear-garden, and to this day the theatrical world of China calls itself "The Pupils of the [Emperor's] Pear-Garden." Another painting[2] shows the difficulties that the emperor sometimes encountered in managing the women of the palace. He was notoriously infatuated with the Kuei-fei, Yang, but to punish her disobedience of his wishes it suited his imperial dignity on one occasion to expel the lady from his presence. Though she was banished by his order, he could not resist the temptation to soften the punishment by sending her dishes from the imperial table; this kindness so moved Yang Kuei-fei that she was impelled to break the Confucian law against mutilation of the body, and sent her im-

[1] Category II, No. 35. [2] *Ibid.*, No. 8, Sec. 8.

perial lover a lock of her beautiful hair. Ming-huang, at this sacrifice, was overcome with emotion and the story ends with the reinstatement of Yang Kuei-fei as court favorite. That humor was not wanting either in Ming-huang or in Li Lung-mien is illustrated by a third subject[1] in this same series, of the emperor looking at himself in a mirror, while surrounded by his attendants. As his gayety was at this period much subdued by the severe and dictatory character of his efficient premier Han Hsiu, his courtiers advised him to send away the troublesome officer, whereupon the dejected Ming-huang, gazing at himself in the mirror, replies: "Though I have become thin, the empire is getting fat."

The other illustrations in this group of "Historical Facts concerning the Relations between Emperors and their Subjects" are essentially Confucian in that they emphasize the duties of the ruler more than those of the ruled, and praise the fearless independence as well as the loyalty of the officials. The first section tells of the rebuke by an aged toll-gate keeper to the Duke of P'ei, the first Han emperor, because the young duke did not rise when his venerable subject entered the room. "If you desire to bring to an end the unprincipled Ch'in dynasty, you should not receive an elderly gentleman sitting," the indignant toll-gate keeper tells his future emperor. The chronicle concludes: "Up rose the Duke of P'ei and offered his apologies." In the second story, the Emperor Wên-ti (179–157 B.C.) is told by one of his officers that he must have himself buried without desire-creating riches, if he would protect his coffin against violation; and the third narrative describes the oft-repeated heroism of Fêng, a woman-officer of low rank, who saved the life of the Emperor Yuan-ti by placing herself in the path of a bear that threatened his royal person. The fifth illustration, which is devoted to that highest of Con-

[1] Category II, No. 8, Sec. 4.

fucian ideals, loyalty, pictures Ho Kuang who, as premier to the Emperor Chao-ti (87–74 B.C.), attempted to usurp the power of the throne. In a moment of confusion he tried to intimidate the Keeper of the Royal Seal to surrender to him this emblem of power; but the Keeper, sword in hand, protested, saying, "My head you may take, but not the seal." Instead of murdering the man who stood in his way, the premier was lost in admiration of the officer's devotion and courage, and the following day, at his instigation, an imperial edict was issued that the Keeper of the Royal Seal should be promoted to a rank two grades higher, "an act for which the people gave Ho Kuang much credit." Another quite characteristic narrative is that of Wang Mêng of the Chin period, a scholar and student of war, who continued unconcernedly to scratch himself while interviewing the Field-Marshal Huan Wên. This unconventional behavior so impressed the officer with Wang's independence that he asked him to accept an appointment of high rank. "Wang Mêng, however, went back to his hills."

The pictures which Lung-mien painted for the instruction of women[1] are interestingly numerous and very lofty in tone, indicating that he had toward women the usual Confucian attitude, one of the finest that any culture has achieved. At all periods in China, women were free to develop themselves to the extent of their abilities; their power in the community was recognized, and any duty, even that of ruling the empire, might fall to their lot. An exalted behavior was expected of them, which was in turn rewarded by the most profound respect. Many are the stories of feminine loyalty which Li commends, as are also the examples of female vanity and wickedness which he helps to condemn. He illustrated the "Book of Filial Piety for Girls,"[2] which had been written by a woman during the T'ang period in the style of Confucius' "Book

[1] Category II, Nos. 1, 5, 30, 31, 37, 38, 39. [2] *Ibid.*, No. 39.

of Filial Piety," and after his paintings he calligraphed those parts of the text which he had used as his subjects. He also copied Yen Li-pên's "Portraits of Eminent Women,"[1] which was based upon the "Biographies of Eminent Women" written by the historian Liu Hsiang (77 B.C.). This is a compilation of the lives of prominent women, both good and evil, made as a warning to the Emperor Ch'êng-ti, whose favorites came mostly from the lower classes, that women have a great influence upon the culture of the nation as a whole. The portraits that have been preserved are those of Têng Wan, Queen-consort of King Wu (740–690 B.C.) of Ch'u; Baroness Mu of Hsü (*c.* 660 B.C.); and that of the mother of Chao K'uo, general to King Hsiao-ch'êng (265–245 B.C.) of Chao.

The reasons why these women were celebrated give an admirable insight into Confucian character. Têng Wan, Queen of Ch'u, is famous for a reply that she made to King Wu before he set out upon his last campaign. In the spring of 690 B.C., the king, who was about to attack once more the small state of Sui, went to his ancestral temple, according to custom, for a period of fasting and meditation; but before performing this ceremony he went to see his Queen-consort and confessed to her that he found it beyond his power to collect his scattered and chaotic thoughts. Têng Wan sighed and said: "Your enjoyment of life and honor is coming to an end. It is a law of nature that an overflowing self-conceit always makes one's mind uncontrollable. Our ancestors must know of your vanity; therefore, on the eve of your departure, when important commands must be issued, they [as a warning] have caused your mind to be incapable of concentration. Our state will be fortunate if only this expedition proves no great loss to our army and you yourself should die during the journey, [thus avoiding the disgrace of being killed in the field

[1] Category II, No. 38.

by the enemy]." The king left and died in his camp at the Lang-mu Hill in Hupeh.

Baroness Mu of Hsü was a daughter of Duke Yi (668–661 B.C.) of the Wei state. It happened that when the Baron of Hsü first asked her in marriage, the Duke of Ch'i was also a suitor for her hand. Hearing of this, she expressed the following opinions to her governess in order that the latter might transmit them to her father: "Hsü is a small state and far away from our country, while Ch'i is big and lies much closer to us. As our country has been harassed by troubles from every side, would it not be far better for my father to give my hand to Ch'i so that my presence in that state may exert some influence in the interest of Wei?" Her father refused to listen to her suggestion and gave her in marriage to Hsü. Later (in the year 660 B.C.), the Tis, a northern Tartar tribe, attacked Wei and, as it turned out, Hsü could render no help. The new king (elder brother of the Baroness) and his people all fled to a city on the eastern frontier of Wei. This gave rise to the baroness' pathetic ode, "I would have galloped my horses."[1]

The third picture was that of the wife of the veteran General Chao Sha, and the mother of Sha's son, K'uo. King Hsiao-ch'êng of the Chao state, having dismissed his famous general, Lien P'o, replaced him with Chao K'uo to conduct the defence against the powerful state of Ch'in. K'uo's mother petitioned the king, pointing out that her son was not qualified for the important position of a commanding general. The king questioned her as to the ground for her protest, and she replied: "When my husband was alive, I used to see how polite, friendly, sympathetic, and kind he was to all people, from those that were considered superior to him in virtue and learning down to the officers and men under his command; on the day that he received the king's

[1] See Legge, *Shê King*, Pt. I, Bk. IV, Ode 10.

order to conduct a campaign, he would immediately withdraw all his attention from his family affairs. On the day that K'uo was appointed a commanding general, he sat himself upon a high seat to receive his officers and men, so that they have regarded him since with awe and fear. He hoards up all the gold and silks the king has bestowed upon him. He gives his attention more to his personal wealth than to the army he is commanding. What does Your Highness think of such a man as compared with his father?" The king chose to ignore her protest. About forty or fifty days later the Ch'ins launched a violent attack upon that part of the Chao territory which K'uo had been defending, with the result that K'uo himself was killed in battle and some four or five hundred thousand troops surrendered themselves to Ch'in. The mother was ever praised by the world for her wisdom.

Again we find Li copying Ku K'ai-chih's scenes from the "Counsels of the Woman-secretary,"[1] which had been written in the third century A.D. by the scholar Chang Hua for the Empress Chia, in order to teach her that arrogant behavior was inconsistent with womanly virtue. He enumerates the ideal qualities of woman which the empress should emulate and, for the sake of propriety, makes his essay read as if it had been presented by the woman-officer (Nü-shih) of the palace. His examples are all taken from history and give a beautiful picture of the Confucian woman as well as of her position and opportunities of influence in the life of the community.

Repeatedly do we find Lung-mien extolling the faithful nature of woman, whether of a personal or of a patriotic character. He, like many another Chinese artist, delights in the adventures of Wên-chi,[2] who was captured by Tartar cavalrymen during the chaos of the year A.D. 195 and taken into the household of Tso-hsien, prince of the southern Hsüng-nu Kingdom. During

[1] Category II, No. 31. [2] *Ibid.*, No. 61.

the twelve years that she spent in Tartar captivity, she never ceased mourning for her native land, and she is usually depicted returning to the Han Kingdom in her dreams. The equally firm devotion of a wife to her husband is described in the picture entitled "Weaving into Brocade a Poem of Reversible Text,"[1] that illustrates the story of Su, wife of Tou T'ao, who, though her husband took another wife during his period of banishment to the "flowing sands," waited patiently for his return and reminded him of his duties in this reversible poem of eight hundred and forty characters. Of paintings that celebrate female beauty[2] there are also several, for womanly charms have ever been a power in China and have often played a momentous rôle in her history.

Another set of Confucian paintings that seems to have ranked as one of the finest of Li's efforts is the group of eight illustrations which he made of "Parental Love and Filial Piety."[3] The first painting shows Confucius admonishing his son that without the study of the Odes he could not speak well and without a knowledge of Ceremonial he could not have good manners. The familiar story of the honest and self-sacrificing way in which the mother of Mencius brought up her son is the subject for the next illustration; and the third sounds a warning against laziness. The Viscount of Wên is reproved by his mother because he does not wish her to work. "In order not to fail your forefathers," she tells him, "you must give yourself day and night to application and cultivation." Another warning which Lung-mien embodies in the fourth picture is against the dangers of leaving great wealth to one's children. He quotes Su Kuang in the Han Shu to the following effect: "If I leave my sons and grandsons to toil in order that they may have enough clothing and food, they will be the equals of the people all around; but if I seek to increase our wealth, making it more than they actually need, I shall only teach

[1] Category II, No. 5. [2] *Ibid.*, Nos. 1, 2, 30. [3] *Ibid.*, No. 62.

them to become slothful. If they are wise and I leave them much wealth, I shall rob them of their energy and determination, while if they are fools, much wealth will add to them nothing but misdeeds." The remaining pictures give various famous instances of the devotion of children to their parents and grandparents, showing that in caring for one's elders, not only the mouth and body, but the heart as well, must be nourished.

Another picture of importance, because it illustrates the attitude of tolerance which Confucianism entertained toward Buddhism, is the painting of "T'ui-chih's Interview with Ta-tien."[1] T'ui-chih, or Han Yü, as he is better known to history, was a greatly renowned essayist, poet, statesman, and philosopher of the T'ang dynasty and one of the noblest individuals which that period produced. During his lifetime (A.D. 768–824) Buddhism was at the height of its development, and Han Yü, as a staunch Confucian, was bitterly opposed to the superstitious excesses which the Emperor Hsien-tsung permitted himself and encouraged in others. In his old age he was banished to the Governorship of Ch'ao-chou as punishment for a strongly worded admonition to the emperor against the worship of some pieces of Buddha's bones that had just been imported from the west. While he was living in this remote province, the rumor began to spread at home that he had been converted to the Buddhist faith. One of his friends must have written him concerning this astonishing report, for in his complete works is a letter which is worth repeating here for the same reason, no doubt, that Lung-mien was impelled to illustrate it, because it shows the good feeling that existed between the leaders of each faith at the moment when they were supposed to have been most hostile. Just as Han Yü was the leader of Confucian thought, so Ta-tien, the priest who is mentioned in the letter, was at this period the most prominent upholder

[1] Category III, No. 65.

of Buddhism. "You said in your letter that from a report, I, Yü, have been converted to the Buddhist faith. No, the rumor is utterly unfounded. However, there is one thing, I think, in my recent life that may have given rise to this report. It was when I was in my Ch'ao-chou post that I found an old priest, named Ta-tien, who was very intelligent and had a catholic understanding of all doctrines. And because in that distant part of the empire there was a dearth of people whom I found it worth while talking to, I sent for the old priest from the hills to come to my official residence in the Chou city; and I had him stay with me for about twelve days. Later when I went to the sea-coast to offer sacrifices to the spirits, I paid a visit to the old priest in his quarters; and when I left for Yüan-chou I gave him some clothing as a parting gift. All this was simply a demonstration of commonplace human feeling and was not actuated by my belief in his creed or by any desire on my part to secure any future happiness or benefit for myself."

Many additional directions of the Confucian aims may be found in the catalogue of Li Lung-mien's work; but since we shall later examine the individual Confucian character as exemplified by Li Lung-mien's friends, these excerpts will here suffice to show how distinguished were the innumerable traditions that Confucianism tried to uphold and how simple and broad-minded were its doctrines in the days of its finest development.

VI

If we now turn to a consideration of the Taoist pictures, what do we find? Gone is the background of ceremonious courts, the pomp of emperors, the influence of restraint and tolerance; gone also is the feeling for the elegancies of life, the benign atmosphere of womanly wisdom and womanly graces.

In their stead we have a rudely masculine world that prefers for its abode the remotest fastnesses of nature, where ceremony yields to utter freedom. The emperor is no longer the centre of this universe; and if he appears at all, it is not as the revered Son of Heaven but as the representative of all the world's imperfections. The court is distant and abjured; and man's relationship to man is not the noblest aim of life, but a burden from which only the unfailing and unchanging forest solitude is a refuge and a release.

The most noteworthy group of Taoists, not only because they developed an extreme and eccentric form of this philosophy but because they ever remained enshrined in the hearts of the Chinese scholars, is unquestionably that of "The Seven Wise Men of the Bamboo Grove,"[1] consisting of Hsi K'ang, Yüan Chi, Shan T'ao, Hsiang Hsiu, Liu Ling, Yüan Hsien, and Wang Yung. These worthies lived in the third century A.D.; all were scions of aristocratic families and some were officers of high rank, but they were united by their detestation of conventions and their contempt for the confused political conditions of the day. As they all had a profound love of nature, they retired to the freedom of an unconstrained existence in a remote part of modern Yüan-wu, Honan, where their mode of life was not only free but often decidedly jovial and even riotous in character. Of the many groups of scholar-recluses that Chinese history tells about, these men are the most important, because their philosophic conceptions, which they not only wrote but actually lived, have influenced the morals and manners of China even down to the present day. They have embodied for the scholar world the very spirit of independence, and their literary productions have been cherished and imitated by untold generations of thoughtful students. There is no better way of acquiring an insight into their mentality than by reading a letter of protest written

[1] Category II, No. 4.

by one of them, Hsi K'ang, to his fellow-member, Shan T'ao, because Shan T'ao had recommended his friend, the writer, as his successor in the position of secretary to the Civil Service Board. This letter has ever been beloved in China because, though highly personal, it expresses the scholar's impatience with routine living and the attitude toward the world at large of the recluse temperament, "the man high above the mundane"; but Hsi K'ang is not typical when he expresses, as he does here, a contempt for the sage-kings and for Confucius, an attitude of treason and profanation which in A.D. 262 cost him his life. Just before he was executed, he asked for his beloved harp, and sang an ancient song known only to him, so that, as he put it, the song and he might die together.

A Letter from Hsi K'ang to Shan T'ao Severing their Friendship.

DEAR FRIEND: Long, long ago you praised me before your uncle for my reluctance to enter public service, which made me think that you understood me. Yet, ever since, I have often wondered how you could know my mind, as I never confided my thoughts to you. Then, last year, on my return from a trip to the east, the report reached me that you had tried to recommend me to the government to take your place [as a secretary of the Civil Service Board]. The attempt was fruitless, but it has convinced me of one thing, that you really know nothing about me. This, however, is not to be wondered at; for, while you are a man of catholic tastes, ready with good-natured approval of any merit in others, I am by nature straightforward and intolerant, and much in the world is repulsive to me; thus our friendship is merely a matter of chance. A short while ago, hearing that you had been promoted one grade higher, I felt, and still feel, somewhat worried, my fear being that you might behave like a certain important cook, who, a bit shy of the great responsibility of his position, insisted on dragging in some one to help him, and, meat-knife in hand, infected that some one with all sorts of unpleasant smells.

Let me, therefore, give you a full account of my personal likes and dislikes.

I have occasionally read of men who could render valuable services to the world and at the same time preserve their own integrity. I used to think that such characters were non-existent; but now I begin to suspect that such people are not impossible; take, for instance, Laotzŭ and Chuang-chou [Chuangtzŭ], whom I regard as masters, Liu-hsia Huei[1] and Tung-fang So,[2] who were decidedly wise men, Chung-ni [Confucius] and many others, all these contented themselves with minor positions in the public service. They did this because they hoped that they might have opportunities of doing the people some good. For them, I confess, this was perfectly right and I have nothing to say against them; for, as superior men, were they not entitled to do whatever they thought best? But for precisely this reason I cannot force myself to take them as an example, inasmuch as my nature cannot stand what theirs could endure.

I have often read the biographies of Shang Tzŭ-p'ing[3] and T'ai Hsiao-wei.[3] Ah! how each reading made me yearn toward them and admire them more and more! My father died when I was very young; and, as both my mother and brother treated me with much indulgence, I paid little attention to studying the Classics; moreover, I was by nature so careless and lazy that often for a whole month or a fortnight I would not wash my head and face, and unless the irritation proved almost unbearable, I could not persuade myself to take a bath. As I have now enjoyed this self-indulgence so long, my mind and feelings have become more and more indifferent and gone more and more astray until my abandonment, having made me violate all conventional politeness, has been brought to perfection by my lazy habits. However, my circle of friends has been magnanimous enough to overlook my lack of manners. Then I began the study of Laotzŭ and Chuangtzŭ and this has accentuated my abandonment, with the result that all my desire to progress in the world of glory has been on the wane day by day, while my zeal to live according to my own nature has become gradually intensified.

[1] An officer of the state of Lu, shortly before the time of Confucius, who was distinguished for his upright character.

[2] A gifted scholar and official under the Emperor Han Wu-ti, second century B.C.

[3] Both well-known scholar-recluses during the second century A.D.

My case may be likened to that of a bird or deer; if they are domesticated when young, they submit meekly to all sorts of chastisement and restraint; but when restraint commences after they are grown up, they look about in frenzy, tug wildly at their fastenings, and rush unhesitatingly even into boiling water or flames to free themselves. Even though you should adorn them with ornaments of gold and feed them with the most tempting morsels of food, you would only succeed in quickening their thought of the deep woods and their desire for its rich grasses.

Yüan Ssŭ-tsung[1] never criticized other people's faults. I used to take him as my example, but so far I have failed to equal it; he is a man of high filial piety who would not harm anybody or anything. His only fault lies in drinking to excess. Yet for this small failing he has been condemned by conventional people, and their enmity against him seems almost personal; but he is fortunate in having a defender and protector in the Commander-in-Chief.[2] Now I have not the attributes of Ssŭ-tsung, for I am guilty of the worst manners; then, again, I never understand human nature, and on the question of tact I have always been very dense. Alas! without the caution of Wan-shih,[3] and with my love of frankness, is there in the long run any possibility that in my dealings with the world, during which I should see defects and faults cropping up all around day after day, I could avoid trouble, however ardently I might wish it?

In human society there has always been a body of etiquette in force, just as at court a set of definite rules has ever been observed. In relation to these things I have studied myself thoroughly and come to the conclusion that there are seven conditions that to me are utterly unbearable, and two others which make it highly inadvisable [for me to enter public life].

I. I love to lie in bed and get up very late; but [as a public officer] the official messengers would keep on urging me to rise.

II. I love to walk about with a scholar's harp under my arm and hum some lines of poetry, or to shoot and fish in the grassy country; but [if I were in public service] I

[1] Yüan Chi, a fellow-member of the group of "Wise Men."

[2] The renowned General Ssŭ-ma Chao, father of the founder of the Chin dynasty.

[3] A prominent official of the second century B.C., famed for his caution.

should always have some runners or soldiers standing beside me in attendance, to prevent me from doing what I wish.

III. If I sit upright for an hour, a numb feeling comes over my whole body. Imagine then that I should have to wrap myself in official full dress and perform obeisances to my superiors!

IV. I have always found difficulty in writing, and by nature I hate to write; but this world is full of business, which my littered desk readily proves. Now, if I ignore everything by not answering, I violate the conventions and hurt my friends' feelings; on the other hand, if I force myself into doing the proper thing, I am sure I could not keep it up.

V. I dislike to call upon any family that has suffered a bereavement to offer my condolences; but society regards this etiquette as so important that my neglect of it has rarely been forgiven, and among those who resented my neglect the most were people who would not hesitate to do anything to injure me. I sometimes reproach myself for the things that I have done, but what can I do to rectify my nature? Willingly would I bow to the prevailing custom, but I should be concealing my real character; and after all such efforts I probably should not be able to escape uncriticized.

VI. Vulgar people always disgust me, and in the service one cannot help mixing with them. Sometimes the rooms are so crowded with guests and friends that their shouts and voices are simply deafening. The disorder, the dust, and the odors! And the thousand pantomimic scenes and endless gesticulations presented to one's eyes!

VII. I cannot stand annoyance. But official business has ever been multitudinous: thus my mind would be entwined with all sorts of affairs incident to my duty, and my thoughts would be disturbed by the occurrences of the world.

[The two things which make it inadvisable for me to enter public life:]

I. Quite often I deride T'ang[1] and Wu,[2] and hold Chou[3] and K'ung[4] in contempt.

[1] T'ang (1766–1754 B.C.) was the founder of the Shang dynasty.

[2] Wu (1122–1116 B.C.) was the first emperor of the Chou dynasty.

[3] Chou, known as Chou-kung, was the elder brother of Wu, first emperor of Chou.

[4] K'ung, *i.e.*, Confucius.

Such views, when one persists in them as I have done, will become known some time or other to the public, and then the moral mind of the entire world would certainly not look at me with toleration.

11. My stern nature hates all improper conduct. Being careless, courageous, and outspoken, my indignation breaks out whenever the occasion warrants.

Now, with a nature as strict and intolerant as mine, and coupled with these nine weaknesses, I might, if such a thing is possible, escape outside attack, but I should certainly suffer internally. Is it then good for me to remain in this world of men?

Furthermore, I have heard of a tradition of the Taoist priests that taking the "Chu-Huang-Ching"[1] makes one live long — a teaching in which I have a great deal of faith. Besides, I have enjoyed prodigiously my saunterings among the mountains and streams, and my contemplation of the fishes and the birds; but, as soon as I enter public service, I should have to forego all these pleasures. How can I leave what I have enjoyed to undertake what I have always disliked?

The value of friendship between two men lies in the understanding that each has of the other, and in the help that each gives to the development of the other. The ancient sages and the modern wise men have all done this for their friends; and we may consider this kind of friendship as a "beginning-to-end" friendship and one in which there is true mutual understanding. A piece of straight wood is never used to make a wheel, nor a crooked piece to make a lath; for people, far from wishing to do injustice to the natural qualities of wood, want to make a proper use of it. In like manner, the four classes[2] of people have each their own suitable vocation, and each feels happy only when it can attain its own ambition. Barring the superior wise men, none can adapt himself to a life entirely against his nature. You must not, just because you like the ceremonial hat of the Shang period, force upon the natives of Yüeh [Chêkiang, Fukien, etc.] the ceremonial hats of Chou [since they cut off their hair, go about naked, and do not require hats], or, just because you relish putrid food, feed the phoenix on dead rats.

[1] A medicinal plant, still used in China, supposed by the Taoists to make the body immortal.

[2] The four classes were the scholars, farmers, artisans, and merchants.

Of late, I have taken up the study of hygienics. I have been trying to keep at a distance all things relating to glory, to give up all food that is delicious and rich, to permit my mind to work only in absolute quietism, and to lay stress on non-exertion. I would not take any notice of your desires even though I were free from those nine weaknesses; but since in addition I have suffered from a weakness of the heart which has lately become more and more serious, it is entirely out of the question for me to endure what I do not like. I have weighed this matter and I am perfectly sure of myself. If, through my own doing, I should come to my rope's end, I would not complain; but surely you have no cause to wrong me by attempting to drag me down.

I have just suffered two bereavements, the loss of my mother and my brother, and have thereby been subjected to great distress. My daughter is thirteen, and my son just eight; while they are both under age, I am far from being in good health. In considering all these sorrows, how shall I express my feelings to you? My only desire at present is to live quietly in my dingy lane, bring up my children and grandchildren, have a chat once in a while with my relatives and old friends, or take a cup of wine that need not be of the best and play a tune on my harp; there all my ambitions and desires cease.

Your pestering me, if you persist in it, is due probably to no other motive than that of securing for public service some one that might prove useful to the present government; but of all my unsystematic, peculiar, careless ways and my inexperience in official business there is nothing that is not already known to you; and in addition I see in myself no qualities that can equal those of the wise and able men of to-day. If you consider it odd that, while all the vulgar people covet honor and glory, I alone am happy in keeping away from these — well, perhaps this is the view that comes nearest to my attitude of mind, and I may claim that much to my credit. But this attitude is admirable only in those that really have great genius and extensive knowledge, and yet refuse to seek honor and glory. In my case, I am merely trying, on account of my bad health, to stay away from active life so that I may safeguard myself and live out what years remain to me. Such being the case, it merely indicates that my nature is lacking in ambition. Is there any virtue in that to speak of? Should you insist on my entering public service,

you would, the very day that you brought force to bear upon me, drive me straightway out of my mind; I do not think that you would resort to this, unless you had a serious grudge against me. Once a country fellow, having enjoyed basking in the sun and having found the taste of watercress much to his liking, wanted to recommend his discoveries to the emperor. His intention was commendable, to be sure, but was it not a bit absurd? I hope you will not behave likewise.

The foregoing is a representation of my views. Now that I have explained them fully to you, let me bid you good-bye!

Hsi K'ang.

To those who have realized the Confucian world of order, loyalty, and passion for service, such an unrestrained and even treasonable letter seems almost incomprehensible, unless they are familiar with the historical events that preceded it. Though Hsi K'ang has been selected as the most striking antithesis in temperament to his Confucian countrymen, his was by no means an isolated case, and he represents the violence of the spiritual rupture that occurred in China immediately after the downfall of the Han Empire. It is necessary to visualize this period of China's cultural development in order to gain a full understanding of her later arts, especially that of painting, for it was then that most of the mental foundations were relaid which found expression in the literature, calligraphy, and pictorial art of the T'ang and Sung dynasties.

Not that this change in the Chinese mentality had taken place suddenly. Though the tone of the Han dynasty was predominantly Confucian, Taoist speculations had already enlisted innumerable scholars, and when the restraining force of Confucian discipline had crumbled, the Taoist yearnings which almost every Chinese mind has always contained, asserted themselves as never before.

The necessity for such mental readjustment is implied with a simple obviousness in the political situation in which China, if one can call the collection

of petty kingdoms of the Six Dynasties by a single name, then found herself. The Chin emperors did actually succeed for a century and a half, after much murder and warfare, in establishing a loosely united rule over the three states into which the Han Empire had been divided; but throughout their reign only a minimum of security existed, for the central government was weak, and the five Tartar tribes were pounding ominously and continuously at the door. China was under a perpetual state of siege from without; and, even within his territories, the emperor dared but make suggestions to his subject provinces which were followed or not as the people chose.

The power of Confucianism was naturally dimmed in a state that could not hold the respect of its citizens, and the country turned first to Taoism, and later to Buddhism, for refuge and solace. Unfortunately the mystic side of Taoism, which was later to become such a menace to this whole school of thought, found as many followers as the more constructive teachings which embodied the ancient Chinese love of freedom and of nature; but the latter, especially during the years of the Chin dynasty, became so deeply ingrained in the character of the scholar-world that the Chinese, even now, cannot be understood without a knowledge of the men and manners of this epoch. For the atmosphere of the times has survived to this very day, not only in the writings of "The Seven Wise Men of the Bamboo Grove," but even more worthily in the beautiful poems and essays of T'ao Yüan-ming, whom we shall later study with care, because he so perfectly typifies the contempt for official service, the exaggerated individualism, and also the unhappiness, the blow to pride which a Confucianism that would not entirely die out caused these men to feel at the supine aspect of their government and the disloyalty that reigned throughout the empire.

Many of the officials who, unlike T'ao Yüan-ming and Hsi K'ang, left no

literary records of their thought, lived their lives so eccentrically and with such complete disregard of duty or personal ambition, that their names and deeds became a byword with later generations. Of these men, generals like Shan Chien and Wang Hsi-chih were typical. The former, as Lung-mien himself states,[1] "passed his time in a leisurely and pleasant manner while the empire was rife with revolts and other disturbances. He did nothing but give himself up to the wine-cup. The most prominent native family, the Hsis, had many gardens with ponds. Whenever Shan Chien went out for recreation, he would go to one of these ponds and there he would call for wine and drink until he was half-intoxicated." Wang Hsi-chih,[2] who was a much more remarkable man, the greatest calligraphist of China and one of her leading artistic iconoclasts, was not as hopelessly addicted to drink, but he, too, lost a battle and was retired because it did not suit his lawless disposition to spend time in the dull routine of drilling troops.

Li Lung-mien's catalogue not only gives us the feeling for the independent and lovable mentality of these Taoists, but it shows us that this mood existed in many an earlier stage, and was merely exaggerated in the men of Chin, that it continued, even when China was peacefully settled under the strong rule of the T'angs, and still smouldered amidst the official interests of the Sung dynasty in the heart of every poet and painter worthy of the name.

VII

THOUGH the maladjustment of the Chin scholars forced them into an extreme Taoism, that of other periods was ever tempered by Confucian loyalty to the state. For example, "The Four Hoary Men of the Shang Mountains"[3] had

[1] Category II, No. 8, Sec. 6. [2] *Ibid.*, Nos. 15, 25. [3] *Ibid.*, Nos. 49, 57.

already rendered long service to the Ch'in dynasty (221–207 B.C.) before they fled from the onslaughts of Han; and the fourth century scholars described in "A Scene at Shan Yin"[1] were also "able and conscientious officers," even though "they had such a passionate love of landscape that they were reluctant to remain long in public service." Again, in the "Three Wise Men of Wu-Chung,"[2] Lung-mien groups together scholars who lived at such widely divergent periods as the fifth and third centuries B.C. and the ninth century A.D. because they were all alike in their "contempt for worldly fame and their love of nature."

One might go on indefinitely enumerating examples of this sort, for Li never tires of depicting this mixture of Confucian and Taoist mentality, which, because of its constant recurrence in Chinese history, may really be called the typical Chinese character. Indeed, Li Lung-mien was so often drawn to the delineation of these hermit-scholars because he himself was one of them, and throughout the years of his official duties retained this ideal of utter freedom as the final goal of life.

A portrait such as that of T'ao Hung-ching,[3] for example, shows how likeable, useful, and happy a personality, this mingling of the two schools of thought produced. This sixth century scholar wrote meritorious books both on Confucian and Taoist philosophy, and showed his Confucian respect for government by accepting a position as preceptor to the royal princes of Southern Chi and by his knowledge on all questions relating to court etiquette and other old ceremonies. But "in the year 492 he resigned his official position and took up his abode in the Kou-ch'ü Hills, through which he made extensive trips, hunting for the Elixir Vitae, and whenever he came across beautiful natural scenery, he would sit or lie down, singing or composing

[1] Category II, No. 50. [2] *Ibid.*, No. 68. [3] *Ibid.*, No. 59.

verses and lingering long in absorbed contemplation." The first part of his life is spent in faithful service to the state and the study of government, but his duty done, he departs in quest of the Elixir Vitae! The joy of this contrast! The most systematic conduct of life and office leads not to a dry old age but to a search for Never, Never, Never land. The rest of T'ao Hung-ching's biography sounds as if it might just as well have been written of Lung-mien himself, and not only of him, but of generation upon generation of similar wise and happy natures who neither shirked the responsibilities of life nor lost its joy by accepting its conventions too slavishly. "In about 499, he rebuilt and enlarged his studio [in the Kou-ch'ü Hills] into a three-storied house, the upper floor of which was used as his own abode, the second floor as the lodging of his disciples, while all visitors were admitted only to the lower floor; thus he cut himself off completely from any communication with the world. Only a servant-boy was allowed to remain near him in attendance. He was seven feet, four inches in height, bright in expression, slender in stature, ears quite long. He read more than ten thousand volumes, was very skilful in playing the scholar's harp and at chess, and also at calligraphy of the 'running-hand' and 'seal' characters. He loved especially the breezes that blew among the pine branches, and was transported into a state of ecstasy whenever he heard these waves of sound. Once in a while he sallied forth for a saunter among the rocks and streams all by himself, and was thought by those who saw him to be an immortal being. He liked writing, had a taste for the unique, set the highest value on time, and worked the harder as he advanced in years. He looked a man of thirty when he was more than eighty."

It is this same love of nature that consoled Ch'ên Chung-chü,[1] a contemporary of Li Lung-mien's, when he was banished during Lung-mien's own

[1] Category I, No. 3.

time to Nan-k'ang for protesting against the new financial policy of Wang An-shih. Nothing daunted by his official degradation, he reared two yellow calves, on which he and his friend, Liu Yung-chih, went roaming through the Lu Hills, a diversion which filled them with such delight that Ch'ên wrote a beautiful poem to commemorate these excursions.

"I ride on an ox. Do not laugh at me. In this world one must suit one's own taste.

"Reeds are used to make my whip, grasses for my saddle. Before precipices, hung with waterfalls, or on paths, shaded by pine-trees, whenever I wish to contemplate the scenery or listen to the sound of the waters, I ride slowly, using my whip lightly, and urging my ox gently on, in order that we may not raise so much as a particle of dust.

"I am clad in a cloth gown, girdled with a strand of grass; on my head is a black cap, a mode of dressing that is far from fashionable, but perfectly suited to a mountaineer.

"On my back is a gourd containing wine, from which I take a draught every now and then. From the horn of my ox hangs down a black bag containing books. Often I sing out poems at the top of my voice, often I become so intoxicated that I almost slip from the back of my ox.

"And what a great man my aged friend [Liu] is! For thirty springs he has lived in the Lu Mountains. His voice sounds like a big bell, his eyes flash like lightning. Even at the age of seventy the brilliancy of his expression dazzles all who look at him. He never needs help in mounting or descending from his ox. Surely such a figure in this landscape makes a wonderful picture."

Such were some of the varieties of Taoist character that Li Lung-mien loved endlessly to illustrate. In contrast to these philosophical and literary Taoist-Confucian borderline types, which were at all periods the most numerous and the most representative of China's large scholar population, we find another more mystical kind of Taoist that was not uncommon throughout the Han dynasty, then became very numerous in the third and fourth centuries, and

later, unfortunately, was more influential with the uneducated masses than the better balanced, more productive mentalities which we have just described. This mystic Taoism originated in what for the Chinese temperament was a natural desire to make a practical use of the knowledge which so intimate a contact with nature was bound to produce. Since spirit and matter were one, these early semi-scientists were tempted to seek tirelessly the elixir which would preserve the human body forever, and win for them the only immortality of which they could conceive. This long succession of alchemists may not, however, be entirely contemned, since many of their discoveries were real additions to the chemical knowledge of the Orient. Moreover, we occidentals probably owe it to these dreamers that our own mediaeval scholars laid their fantastic basis for our later chemical sciences, if it is true, as many scholars claim, that the works of the Arabian, Avicenna, then of Albertus Magnus, Roger Bacon, Raymond Lulli, and many another early experimentalist, show the direct influence of this phase of Taoism.[1]

Li Lung-mien was frankly interested in these hermit-alchemists and illustrates the type for us in his portrait of "Old Man, Chang Kuo,"[2] who lived in the eighth century, and who was so devoted to the "investigation of the recipes and drugs of the immortals" that he refused to give up the search in exchange for positions of honor at court. He avoided every sort of community responsibility and spent his life trying to win from nature the secret of immortality, not, to be sure, in another world, but in this world, that he, like his fellow-Taoists, loved to the point of wishing never to relinquish it. "Chang Kuo came from no one knew where. He lived a secluded life in the Chung-t'iao

[1] See "Alchemy in China," in *The Chinese*, by W. A. P. Martin (Harper's). Also L. Wieger, *Histoire des Croyances rêligieuses et des Opinions Philosophiques en Chine*, p. 421.

[2] Category III, No. 2.

range [Shansi]. The men of the time reported that he possessed the secret art of prolonging life, and he himself asserted that he was several hundred years old." Three times the court sent for him to appear, but on two occasions Chang Kuo, who was very skilful in regulating his breath, feigned death, and only at the third summons did he finally consent to come. "One of the princesses, Yü-chên, who was devoted to Taoism, desired to descend to Chang as his wife. The emperor was in favor of the match, but Chang only roared with laughter and flatly refused to obey the imperial command. In 734 he succeeded in tearing himself from the court, went into the Hêng Mountains, and since then no one has known his whereabouts."

Another form of Taoist mysticism, interesting because it takes us far back to the first glimmer of knowledge that we have about China, is found in the "Portrait of the Metamorphic Being Tai-yi."[1] An explanation has been given of the early worship of the North Star and how its fortunes waxed and waned with those of its earthly antitype, the emperor, though never quite eclipsed either by Confucian wisdom or Taoist lore. As late as the eighth century A.D., we find Ch'ên Ts'ang-ch'i explaining in the Supplementary Notes of the T'ang Materia Medica what the connection is between the astronomical form of worship and the beliefs of the Taoists: "T'ai-yi is the ancestor and source of the 'Tao.' T'ai means 'Great' and Yi, 'Tao.' The master of Tao is the King of Nature." If it is not very clear in its thought or its philology, it shows how intimately the T'ang philosophers felt themselves linked to the primitive form of thought, and that they believed nature still meant to them what it had meant to their remotest forefathers. However, the idea of depicting T'ai-yi in human form, as Lung-mien does, lying on a gigantic lotus leaf, would have shocked those unanthropomorphic forefathers considerably, for such a

[1] Category III, No. 55.

rendering is obviously the influence of the many human representations of Taoist spirits and Buddhist deities with which this age was familiar.

The delightful, imaginative, fairy-tale side of Taoism is illustrated in the "Immortal of Ku-yi"[1] and the "Metamorphic Being on the Wind."[2] Both these supernatural beings are described by the philosopher Lieh-tzŭ, whose works bear the date of the fourth century B.C., but whom later criticism declares an invention of the Han scholars. In his second chapter he says that "The Lieh-ku-yi Hill is on an island in the sea. On this hill there is an immortal who lives by inhaling the wind and drinking the dew, without eating any cereals. Its mind is like a deep spring, its appearance that of a maiden."

With never-failing imagination Lieh-tzŭ describes how he learned to ride on the wind:

"After a period of nineteen years, Lieh-tzŭ absorbed all that his teacher Lao-shang-shih and his friend Po-kao-tzŭ knew about the Tao. He felt that the functions of his organs were utterly interchangeable, that his corporeal form had melted away, bones and flesh having disappeared altogether, and that he could be carried wherever the wind blew as if he were the leaf of a tree or a dry shell. Indeed, he was not sure whether it was the wind that rode on him or he that rode on the wind."

Tales such as these associated Taoism closely with the popular spirit worship of Chinese life, which must also have interested Lung-mien; for what is reputed by Chinese criticism to be one of his best known and most beautiful creations, is a set of illustrations done for "The Songs of the Nine Spirits."[3] These "Songs" were composed in the fourth century by Ch'ü Yüan, a poet of the state of Chu, in an attempt to elevate and beautify the spiritistic rites that the uncultivated classes always persisted in celebrating. While offering

[1] Category III, No. 24. [2] *Ibid.*, No. 72. [3] Category II, No. 7.

sacrifices they would play music and dance to please the spirits; and as Ch'ü Yüan was shocked at the ludicrous wording of their songs, he took the ideas they expressed and put them into better form in order to lend some dignity to the ceremony. It is natural that philosophic beliefs of so intellectual a nature as those of China, whether Confucian or Taoist, were untenable by the masses, and as the inevitable expression of more popular conceptions, we find this strong undercurrent of superstition. It was ever of a local character and had a fluid quality, differing from place to place and from one generation to another. Both Confucianism and Taoism made concessions to it in their rituals; and Ch'ü Yüan's kindly concern for the form of these popular beliefs, as well as Lung-mien's pictorial representation, are quite characteristic of the tolerance and interest that the Chinese scholar felt concerning the needs of his less cultivated countrymen. For they had the insight to perceive that these simpler people were expressing in their language the same awe for the force of nature and its silent influence upon the fortunes of man that the scholars themselves were groping to enmesh in a philosophic network of language, in the subtleties of art, or in the forms of social and religious ceremonial.

In the Sung dynasty the number of China's inhabitants who were paying imperial taxes, according to the Great Dictionary, amounted on an average to some thirty millions,[1] a population that could still be intellectually dominated by the large scholar-class; when the number of China's illiterates increased, this superstitious side of Taoism gradually became more and more powerful until, with the vast uneducated population of later centuries, little else remained. But this later degeneration must not be allowed to influence our appreciation of the early Taoist contributions to the life and literature of the Chinese race.

Nor must these crude beliefs be confused with those of the cultivated classes.

[1] See also De Mailla, *Histoire de la Chine*, Vol. VIII, p. 302. All figures on China's population are unreliable.

This need of the mystic element in life was as absent from the sane mentality of the Sung scholar as it had ever been dominant in that of the masses. Even divination, which Confucius in his respect for antique culture had retained, was neglected by the Sung philosophers, and a purely historical, an intellectually appreciative attitude toward all religious practices and personages prevailed. This can be clearly seen in the scriptural Taoist paintings, in the illustrations for Taoist writings,[1] or even in the portraits of Laotzŭ, the founder of Taoism, toward whom, if toward any one, a religious attitude might be expected. But we find on the scrolls of "Laotzŭ Delivering his Tao Tê Ching"[2] only a short matter-of-fact account, quoted from the history of Ssŭ-ma Ch'ien, of Laotzŭ's life and his final departure for the unknown when he saw that the royal house of Chou was doomed. It becomes quite evident from these paintings and from the Buddhist group which we still have to consider that the religious sense, as we understand it, was not a part of the mental equipment of the Sung scholar. The three so-called religions of China furnished him with matter for deep moral and philosophic speculation, but not with situations in which the element of faith was brought into play. He had faith of a profound character, faith in the development that lies for man in his interactions with the environment, and reverence he had in abundance, only it was not saved for religious services, for creeds and dogmas. It was meted out from a full heart to every bud that opened in the springtime, to the beauty and sanctity of human relationships, and to the great men among those more remote generations that had labored for him as he now labored for generations yet unborn. If the Tao manifested itself in all things, why seek it exclusively in temples or their ministrants? Since the Confucian forms of social intercourse and the Taoist interpretation of man's environment made every

[1] Category III, Nos. 20, 48. [2] *Ibid.*, No. 53.

phase of life a religious ceremony, living itself became the holiest of rituals; and the art that portrayed nature's loveliness, or human virtues, or merely the grace of flying horsemen, was no less—nay—was more religious in character than that which occupied itself with consecrated sanctity and institutional forms of worship.

VIII

WHAT room was left in the minds and hearts of a race so actively worshipful of life and earth for the teachings of the Buddhist faith? If we turn to the Buddhist paintings, what do we find? One sharp contrast strikes us immediately. Here are no lofty inscriptions, lovingly written in Li Lung-mien's crystal-like calligraphy, no moral tales held up for all to read and profit by, no historical allusions to wrap them round in ancient and beloved lore; instead we have art comments, the enthusiastic eulogies of successive owners, that sound, after the warmth and idealism and earnest aspiration of the Confucian pictures, as thin as only art chatter can. The paintings themselves, as we know them, are just as beautiful as any of the others, but the very fact that Li left most of his Buddhist pictures to stand on their artistic merits indicates that they could not have been so near to his life and the lives of those for whom he painted, as were the richly suggestive depictions of Confucian characters and Taoist temperaments.

This is borne out by the tenor of the collectors' inscriptions that indicate in the observers the same purely artistic interest that Li himself seems to have had in his Buddhist paintings. Instead of pointing out their moral value or other textual content, as on the Confucian and Taoist subjects, we find Tung Ch'i-ch'ang writing on a scroll of the Sixteen Lohans:[1] "This painting is very

[1] Category III, No. 8.

antique and high in style, and in spirit very lively and realistic. This scroll was transferred to me for a book of Sung and Yüan pictures." Not a word on its religious, ethical, or historical import. And Chang Ch'ou, the great seventeenth century critic, in speaking of "The Assembly on the Sea,"[1] gives the following description: "The landscape, trees, and rocks look unique and magnificent; the figures are replete with life, and mingled with all these, the mists, clouds, dragons, water, palaces, buildings, and all sorts of things are depicted with consummate skill and care; nor is the style anything but antique and graceful." What joy it must have been to Lung-mien when under his brush this variety of things sprang to life! In another Buddhist painting[2] we find him making an opportunity to exercise his skill on the depiction of "birds, ferocious animals, plants, and trees, one hundred and twenty-five in number." We are delighted that he did them, and positively yearn for a sight of such an outburst of imaginative ingenuity; but can this be called a religious influence? Buddhism with its endless legends was an additional opportunity for the artistic mind to soar; but so had Taoism also functioned before it, and every tributary state that the artists had heard of but never seen, and all the innumerable spirit-tales that in China are even older than any of these other vehicles of poetic and pictorial expression.

The only Buddhist painting that helps us to feel a contact between that religion and the life of the Chinese is the picture of "The White Lotus Club,"[3] a group of high-minded officials, priests, and literary men who in the fourth century[4] sought the solitude of the Lu Mountains in order that they might strive for a clean and holy life. Under the leadership of Hui-yüan (A.D. 334–416), who was the founder of the Ching-t'u (*Pure Land*) school of esoteric Buddhism, they settled in the Tung-lin (*Eastern Forest*) Monastery, and

[1] Category III, No. 10. [2] *Ibid.*, No. 44. [3] *Ibid.*, No. 29. [4] *Circa* A.D. 386.

made it a condition of membership to the club that applicants should be "utterly devoid of worldly ambitions and free from all passions." It is recorded that Hsieh Ling-yün (A.D. 385–433), the greatest and proudest scholar of that period, had a pond dug and planted with white lotus for Hui-yüan, to signify his desire to join the club, "but Hui-yüan rejected him on the ground that Hsieh was not peaceful at heart." The philosopher and poet T'ao Yüan-ming, on the other hand, was always a welcome guest, even though he was not a Buddhist. There were eighteen members of the club, of whom ten were Chinese priests, two Hindu Bikshus, and the rest famous scholars, hermits, and retired officials. They have always been known as "the eighteen wise men of the Lu Mountains," or "The White Lotus Club," and their followers eventually reached the number of two hundred and twenty-three. This early Buddhist club in the wilds of the Lu-shan range is of importance because India offers no precedent for such an organization, and because it represents one of the first patent evidences of the effect of Chinese customs on the Buddhist faith. In China such a mode of group life for the scholars or Taoist hermits was an ancient institution, as has already been pointed out.[1] "The Lotus Club" made no novel contribution, therefore, to Chinese culture; but on the other hand, a life such as the members led in contact with nature must have helped considerably to eliminate from the Buddhist creed the subjective tendencies with which it had come from India. The only other historical Buddhist painting is that of "Bodhidharma, the first Chinese Patriarch, handing the Robe of Office to his Successor,"[2] but this concerns itself with Buddhist rather than Chinese history and does not decrease the conviction which the rest of the Buddhist pictures give us, that Buddhism in China, though a powerful mental stimulus, was ever a thing apart and never became one of the closely inter-

[1] Page 31. [2] Category III, No. 63.

woven tissues of Chinese life that both the Confucian and Taoist systems prove themselves to have been.

Upon another of Li's famous Buddhist paintings, "The Assembly on the Sea,"[1] we find the following significant quotation from the Hua Hsi, which seems to indicate that some of the Buddhists repudiated Lung-mien: "While none of the scenes is foreign to the Buddhist creed, I must take exception to the division into four groups . . . which shows conclusively that Po-shih could not shake off the ideas of a Confucian scholar." However, as a Confucian scholar, Lung-mien would feel obliged to know, and actually did know intimately, the philosophy of so widespread a religion as Buddhism, which even in his own country had played its rôle. While describing Li's various talents, the Hua Chi[2] mentions that "he studied Buddhism, comprehended its doctrines, and acquired a keen understanding of its hidden meanings," treating the question, in other words, as a purely intellectual interest, a matter of research, as this great philosophic system would still be to the student of to-day, but not in the least a question in which religious faith was involved.

If we wish to be very literal, Li's proportionate interest in Buddhism can also be estimated from the fact that of the two hundred and twenty-one paintings described in the catalogue, forty-three (not counting the second class paintings in the Ch'ien-lung catalogue which are probably copies) are Buddhist, forty are horse paintings with historical allusions and therefore Confucian in character, the others all purely Confucian in bent, with the exception of an occasional Taoist subject. Among these Buddhist pictures are many that were copied merely because the originals were famous paintings by such ancient masters as Wu Tao-tzŭ and Yen Li-pên; for example, in the case of the painting "Drunken Taoist Priests,"[3] which might be suspected of having

[1] Category III, No. 10. [2] Chap. 3, p. 2 b. [3] Category III, No. 62.

a partisan Buddhist slant, the original was made by Yen Li-pên for a heavy cash payment which the Buddhists collected among themselves, in retaliation for a well-known humorous portrayal of "A Drunken Buddhist Monk" that wounded their sectarian pride. As Yen Li-pên executed his commission with great skill and wit, a new tradition of artistic excellence was established, and painter after painter, Li Lung-mien among them, was tempted to try his hand at the now famous subject. As Li has also portrayed "A Tipsy Buddhist Monk,"[1] his utter impartiality and quite general criticism or condonement of this priestly foible is amply demonstrated.

Thus we find from a study of his paintings and their inscriptions that, though not in a religious sense a Buddhist, Lung-mien had an excellent knowledge of Buddhist teachings and sufficient interest in them and their influence on his country to interpret them, at times in original paintings, at times because of the additional Confucian spur of famous precedent. He deals with the Buddhist legends as a poet would, and his love of them is no more an indication of his beliefs than are his representations of Taoist fairies or of the demons of popular spirit-worship. In fact, it is of just this highly imaginative side of Chinese art that the Buddhist subjects are, psychologically speaking, an extension. They added, from this point of view, no new element; but they brought additional material in an abundance and variety that delighted the fancy and the skill of Li Lung-mien, and charmed from his brush an exquisite world that we might otherwise have missed.

Thus, from the aesthetic and religious point of view the Taoist and Buddhist paintings are on a par; but Taoism as a mental stimulus had other important factors that Buddhism did not possess. What makes the Taoist paintings infinitely more significant to Li Lung-mien, and to us as well, is the fact

[1] Category III, No. 61.

that they are so closely interwoven with the life of the Chinese, that they make comprehensible many of their ideals, their history, and customs, as well as the origin of much of their finest literature. They seem to touch all moments of the country's development, link lightly but securely the earliest culture with that of Li Lung-mien's own time; they made him realize, even as he painted, how much of himself was one with these successive generations of impulsive scholars who had followed the call of freedom and left him golden records of their quest. When he painted Buddhist Lohans, he expressed what he, no doubt, greatly admired; when he painted Taoist hermits and poets, he was expressing his very self.

But not his whole self. Beautiful as are the vistas that Taoism reveals, the widest aspect of China's broad realms will ever be seen through the eyes of a Confucian. It is his staunch Confucianism that makes Li Lung-mien different from the painters of all other lands, that made him excel in breadth of vision many even of his own countrymen. Religious influences there have been a plenty in the arts, and nature has stirred other breasts than those of the Taoists, but nowhere and at no time has a man essayed to depict the social, ethical, and political history, all that was preëminent, all that was noble and exemplary in the thought and action of his race. The life of the court and that of the lowliest peoples, modernity and antiquity, the pleasures of childhood and the wisdom of the sage, the conqueror, the poet, foreign countries and foreign conquests, the emperor who loves beauty more than a throne, and the peasant who becomes powerful because of his benevolence and wisdom, these and many, many more are made real for us under the influence of his magic brush. To study all these Confucian subjects, and no doubt the catalogue enumerates but a small part, is to live over again, as Li Lung-mien so constantly lived it, the age-long story of the Chinese race.

What, beside this lofty inspiration, this panorama of a great people, is the temporary influence of religious legends? These have lost their vitality long ago, but the tale of how Mencius' mother brought him up, which was a thousand years old when Lung-mien illustrated it, is still being repeated by the *literati* in the market-places of the remotest Chinese hamlets, and his picture of this philosopher would still mean to them what it once meant to him. We who are outside of this glorious and unbroken development may get the same reaction of beauty from "The Lohans Walking upon the Sea,"[1] or from the portrait of "Laotzŭ Delivering the Tao Tê Ching";[1] but to understand even these and see them in their relative importance, we must perceive clearly that Taoism and Buddhism were ever subsidiary to the main stream of Confucian life, feeding it, enriching it, and then dying out because they had given what they had to give.

It is precisely because Li Lung-mien was so wholly within the Chinese tradition that he was so great, for it gave him a variety of subjects and techniques that no other Chinese artist has ever to the same extent possessed. The earliest of the Chinese painters were exclusively Confucian figure painters, though they occasionally did a Buddhist subject; and even the more widely interested T'ang artists had their specialties. The monumental Wu Tao-tzŭ confined himself largely to the portrayal of Buddhist figures; Wang Wei was equally devoted to landscape; while Han Kan was known exclusively for his pictures of the horse. Li Lung-mien, as a scholar, reviews for us the history of great persons and great events; as a philosopher, he illustrates the great moral treatises and the important social developments, giving to Taoism and to Buddhism their due consideration; and as the adequate interpreter of such widely divergent topics, he was obliged to be just as

[1] See illustrations, Nos. 15 to 20.

skilled in painting figures as landscapes, landscapes as architecture, still-life, horses, or a multitude of other art phases that so broad an interest would imply. Never before and never since has a Chinese artist essayed so wide a field, and none can give so noble, so exact, so varied a view of Chinese life and manners.

IX

One of Li's activities that points to his Confucian attitude of mind as much, perhaps, as any, is his great zeal as a collector of China's ancient bronzes and jades, and his reputation of being, in these matters, the greatest connoisseur of his day. Nor was collecting with the Chinese the blind instinct for amassing possessions, the expression of vanity, or, at best, the vague pursuit of beauty that it is to-day. The first element in their very general love of ancient art-objects was profound respect for the products of their ancestors, and the hope that a scholarly examination of these products would give the most immediate understanding and the closest possible contact with the life and thought of the age that had produced them. To achieve this end great learning was necessary, a knowledge of ancient forms of writing, of history, of customs often become obsolete, of a multitude of other recondite subjects, besides sensitiveness to the *patine*, the quality, the form, and the workmanship of a bronze or jade. Together with the scholar-statesman Ou-yang Hsiu (A.D. 1017–1072), Lung-mien was a forerunner,[1] in this field, of a long line of Chinese collectors and critics, and deserves special credit for helping to arouse the interest and zeal of his more famous and more powerful successor, the Emperor Hui-tsung, to whose preservative efforts we owe so much of the Chinese art that has survived until to-day. Particularly did

[1] Hirth, *Ancient History of China*, pp. 72, 73.

Hui-tsung express his admiration of Li's paintings; but, as we shall see, he acquired not only all of these that he could find, but all of Li's collections as well; and in the construction of his famous catalogue of ancient jades and bronzes, the Hsüan-ho-tien Po-ku-t'u, he was inspired by and frankly followed a catalogue that Li Lung-mien had written and illustrated of his much smaller collection. This assertion is based upon the following paragraph in the T'ieh-wei-shan Ts'ung-t'an[1] of Ts'ai T'ao, the son of Hui-tsung's famous premier, Ts'ai Ching (A.D. 1046–1126): "Li Po-shih, being very fond of the antique, made drawings of his entire collection as well as pieces that he had seen or heard about, and he also wrote descriptions of all these. He gave his work the name K'ao-ku-t'u [*Illustrated Studies in Ancient Art*]. This work had been in circulation without attracting much notice until the years Yüan-fu [1098–1100], when the late old emperor [Hui-tsung] began taking a great fancy to it. It was about the first year of Ta-kuan [1107] that his late majesty compiled the Hsüan-ho-tien Po-ku-t'u [*Comprehensive Illustrated Study in the Ancient Art of the Hsüan-ho Palace*] after the style of Kung-lin's K'ao-ku-t'u."

The biographical section of the "History of the Sung Dynasty," to establish Lung-mien's position as a collector and student of antiquities, gives a picture of the deference that was paid to his judgment by his fellow-officials. It says in part: "Fond of ancient art, he became a good decipherer of rare [antique] characters. Of [bronze bells], caldrons, libation-cups, and other vessels that have existed from the Hsiâ [2205–1763 B.C.] and Shang [1766–1122 B.C.] dynasties downward, he could always give a decision as to their age and decipher their seals and marks. Whenever he heard of a fine piece, he would spend without hesitation an enormous sum to acquire it. At the end

[1] Chap. 4, p. 24.

of Shao-shêng [A.D. 1094–1097] the court came into possession of a royal seal of jade which was submitted to the scholars in the Ministry of Ceremonial for their opinion. Every man had a different idea, but Kung-lin said: 'Seals of Ch'in [221–207 B.C.] were made of jade produced at Lan-t'ien.[1] Now the jade of this seal is perfectly green in color. The characters engraved on it are of the "dragon, earthworm, bird, and fish" type. That shows it was used as an emblem by which an emperor was invested with divine power.[2] Then the jade itself shows the quality of the greatest hardness. The only way of cutting it was by means of a k'un-wu knife[3] and toad's fat.[4] But since this method of carving was lost to the world long ago, there can be little doubt that this seal is a genuine work by Li Ssŭ of the Ch'in period.' This decision settled all disputes."

Li's own collections seem to have been very extensive, as the Hua Chi assures us that "his whole house was full of them." Of the paintings he possessed we find only two mentioned, one by Chan Tzŭ-ch'ien (sixth century), called "Going to the North [Tartary]," and another by Han Kan which came from his father's collection, entitled "The Training of Horses by the Keeper

[1] The fact that the jade in question came from Lan-t'ien corroborates Li's attribution, as this was a famous source for fine jade up to the Han dynasty. (See Laufer's *Jade*, p. 24, note.)

[2] The jade seal as an emblem of the emperor's divine right to rule had been first used by Shih Huang-ti, founder of the Ch'in dynasty, to replace the nine sacred bronzes that had so long demonstrated the divinity of the House of Chou. Though the usual myth assigns the origin of the jade seal to a supernatural being, the idea was really conceived by the Premier Li Ssŭ, because he possessed among many other talents, the secret art of softening jade with toad's fat before carving it with the k'un-wu knife.

[3] The Chinese, though so fond of jade, were never able to invent a knife sufficiently sharp and strong to carve this hard stone; the k'un-wu knife, of which the exact source is disputed, seems to have been of western origin, and all the books agree that it was singularly serviceable for the cutting of the hardest jade. Under the k'un-wu blade they became as "soft wax" or "mud" or "wood."

[4] The softening of jade with toad's fat was an old discovery of the "searching-for-the-secret-of-long-life" sect of Taoism, but is spoken of as a long-lost art as early as the eighth century. The T'ang Materia Medica says the toads were boiled to obtain the fat and that it was not easy to prepare.

of the Imperial Stud";[1] but he must have possessed many more originals by the artists whom he particularly admired, in addition to the vast number of copies which he made of masterpieces that could not be purchased. An amusing and very human account of Li's impatient pursuit of a famous horse painting is given in the "Yi-Shu-Tien" section[2] of the great Chinese Encyclopaedia, the T'u-shu Chi-ch'êng. Li had heard that Chung-hsüan[3] was on his way to the capital, and knowing him to possess a painting by the Prince of Chiang-tu,[4] a famous painter of horses, Li could not bear to wait for the traveller's arrival, but went several days out from the capital to meet him and begged for a look at the painting. Chung-hsüan said to him, "It is not that I am reluctant to show it to you, but here on the road it is so much trouble to get it out. After all, it would not be too late if you would wait until I have arrived at the capital." Li, however, entreated him day and night, and finally it was produced for him. When Li saw it, he heaved a sigh of admiration and was much perturbed. By the time they arrived at the capital Li had obtained the loan of the painting. For several days he tried with all his might to copy it, but he was utterly at sea how to begin. So he sent the painting back with a white piece of board attached inscribed as follows: "A most inspired painting of the very first class. Horses by the Prince of Chiang-tu. I have examined it for several days without being able to let fall my brush [to copy it]. The only thing I can do is to inscribe these words to show the homage I feel for the painter." As the silk was very dilapidated, Li also recommended a man to repair it.

What purports to be a list of Lung-mien's jade collection is set forth in the Nêng-kai-chai Man-lu of Wu Tsêng, a book that was written about the

[1] Category I, No. 15. [2] Section 794, p. 12. [3] Canonized title of Fan Ts'un-jên, died 1101.
[4] Li Hsü, nephew of the Emperor T'ang T'ai-tsung.

time of Li's death or shortly thereafter. The author quotes an inscription from Li Lung-mien himself concerning an ode written by Li's great friend, the poet Tung-p'o, and then enumerates the various pieces, which, however, do not tally with his total: "In the eighth year of Yüan-yu [A.D. 1093], when I [Kung-lin] was holding my official position in the capital and staying in a house near the Red Bridge, my son came into possession of a Ma-tai[1] stone which had been the property of Sub-Prefect Chên Yen-mo of Chia-chou. I liked it so much that I took it into my study. One day Tung-p'o dropped in and said: 'Let us hollow it out and make it into a basin so that now and then you can take out all the jades you have collected and give them a bath. Then we will engrave the forms of all your pieces on the four sides of the basin and I will write an epigrammatic ode to be cut around the rim. We will call it the "Jade Bathing Basin." The jades referred to are sixteen in number, namely, Hu [image of tiger], one pair; Ch'ü [rings], three; a Lulu belt-buckle; one Pi [ornament for lower end of the scabbard]; one Pêng [ornament for mouth of scabbard]; a jade cup of russet color with carvings in relief; a Shui-Ts'ang [girdle-pendant] with designs of water and fish-tail; a mantis-shaped belt-buckle; a woman's head ornament, Chia; a piece called Chêng and one Kung-pi [great disk]."[2]

The author then goes on to say that after Kung-lin's death, the basin disappeared. Years afterward the Emperor Hui-tsung, having been told about it, sent messengers to Li's house to look for it. There the basin still was, hidden away in a heap of dusty rubbish. Li's son Shê handed it over to the imperial envoys, but not before he had carefully obliterated Tung P'o's ode, for though the author was long dead, his works were then under a severe ban through

[1] Ma-tai means "horse step" or mounting block. Its significance here is not clear.

[2] Of these many are described and illustrated in Bks. VIII and X of Lü Ta-lin's *K'ao-ku-t'u* (edition of 1753).

political intrigue, and any one caught with so much as a line of his writings was guilty of *lèse majesté*. Carefully the old stone was wrapped up, put in a lacquered box, and transferred to the Hsüan-ho collection, where it was preserved together with the jades in honor of which it had originally been designed. One of the jade pieces, however, was missing, the Lulu ring, for this had been buried with the remains of Li Lung-mien.

What Kung-lin unquestionably prized most highly among his objects of virtu were his bronzes. For these he was willing to sacrifice any sum, and often he would paint pictures in exchange for specimens that money could not buy. One of the pieces that he loved most was a libation-cup that had belonged to Emperor Tsu-ting (1465–1434 B.C.) of the Shang dynasty; and to its owner, Ts'ai T'ien-ch'i, a well-known painter and literary man, he addressed a poem which states that the very best bronzes are of the period of Shun (2258–2206 B.C.) and of Yü (2205–2198 B.C.), while the inferior ones can be placed not later than the period between the Chou (1122–249 B.C.) and Ch'in (221–207 B.C.) dynasties. However, he adds, "When your standard of taste is too high, you receive from this everyday world only mockery and ridicule."

X

In 1087, Li Lung-mien painted "A Poetical Gathering in the Western Garden,"[1] the most important of his contemporary paintings, because it contains the portraits of all the poets and scholars whom Lung-mien counted among his friends. Of this subject I have seen, in an oriental collection, the small version on a round fan, but even without a glimpse of the originals, the spirit of the picture lives for us in a descriptive essay[2] written by the versatile and bril-

[1] Category II, No. 12. [2] In the Commentary on Su Tung-p'o's poems.

liant Mi Fei, who was himself a member of this famous gathering. As the essay gives so much of the atmosphere of the times, such an intimate view of Lung-mien and his favorite companions, as well as of their mode of enjoying life, it is here reproduced in full with all its glory of color and its wealth of interesting allusions.

"Li Po-shih has made, after the style of General Li, the younger,[1] a landscape in colors in which the water, rocks, clouds, grass, trees, flowers, and bamboo are done with consummate skill. The human figures are very life-like, and their expressions show none of the dusty and vulgar traits commonly seen in the everyday world. It is certainly an extraordinary piece of work.

"Among the figures, the one that wears a black hat and a yellow Taoist robe and is writing with a brush, is my master, Tung-p'o; the one wearing a peach-shaped cap and grape-purple robe, who sits watching beside him, is Wang Chin-ch'ing;[2] the man in a turban and blue dress, sitting with his elbows on a square table, and gazing intently [on the master's writing] is Ts'ai T'ien-ch'i[3] of Tan-yang; another who looks on, with his hands on the back of a chair, is Li Tuan-shu.[4] Behind them a pretty girl, beautifully dressed, stands in attendance; her expression and carriage show that she belongs in a rich and aristocratic house. She is one of the handmaidens in Wang Chin-ch'ing's household.

"Under a pine-tree, that spreads out its branches in all directions, on which a creeping plant with red flowers has entangled itself, is a large stone table littered with antique objects and a scholar's harp. Close by, in the midst of plantains, sits a man on a stone seat. He wears a Taoist hat and a grape-purple robe; his right hand rests upon the stone while the left one holds a book which he is reading. This is Su Tzŭ-yu.[5] In a round

[1] Son of the famous T'ang landscape painter, Li Ssŭ-hsün.

[2] Wang Chin-ch'ing, or Wang Hsin, in whose garden the gathering took place, was the son-in-law of the Emperor Ying-tsung (A.D. 1064–1067), and a famous painter and poet of the period.

[3] Ts'ai T'ien-ch'i, or Ts'ai Chao, wrote a biography of Li Lung-mien which it was not possible to find.

[4] Li Tuan-shu, or Li Chih-yi, another well-known scholar, was secretary to Su Tung-p'o.

[5] Su Tung-p'o's younger brother.

hat and a coarse silk robe is Huang Lu-chih [Shan-ku] sitting in contemplation. The figure in a turban and rustic coat, painting on a scroll the scenes from Yüan-ming's 'Kuei-Ch'ü-Lai,' is Li Po-shih; the man that stands behind Li, with his hands on Li's shoulders, is Ch'ao Wu-chiu.[1] The one that kneels with a stone in his hand, watching Li at his work, is Chang Wên-ch'ien,[2] and the one in a Taoist hat and white robe, with his hands on his knees, looking down at the picture, is Chêng Ching-lao.[3] Behind them is a servant-boy who stands with a staff in his hand.

"Under an ancient pine-tree, whose roots writhe in distorted forms above the earth, sit two figures. The one, in a turban and white dress, who seems to be listening, with his hands in his sleeves, is Ch'in Shao-yu,[4] the other, in a Taoist hat and grape-purple Taoist robe, playing on a harp, is Ch'ên Pi-hsü.[5] One figure, in a cap of the T'ang style and a long, loose robe, writing, with his head up, on a tall piece of rock, is Mi Yüan-Chang;[6] and the man in a turban, watching him, with his hands in his sleeves, is Wang Chung-chih.[7] Right in front of them stands a little servant-boy with bobbed hair, who holds an antique ink-stone in his hands. Back of them all, further on, is seen a stone bridge, and a bamboo-shaded path meanders away to the farthermost part of a clear stream.

"Under some luxuriant green foliage sits a Buddhist, in a Kashaya, on a rush cushion, discussing the theory of 'non-existence'; he is the eminent priest Yüan-t'ung.[8] Beside

[1] Ch'ao Wu-chiu, or Ch'ao Pu-chih, a famous scholar and poet who took T'ao Yüan-ming for his master. He was one of Su Tung-p'o's four disciples.

[2] Chang Wên-ch'ien, or Chang Lai, was a prominent writer and famous for his "tzu" poems, that is, poems intended to be put to music and sung. Not many of the poets excelled in this field. He also was one of Su's four disciples.

[3] Chêng Ching-lao, a noted scholar.

[4] Ch'in Shao-yu, or Ch'in Kuan, was also a master of "tzu," poems written to be sung. He was another of the four distinguished disciples of Su Tung-p'o.

[5] Ch'ên Pi-hsü, or Ch'en Shih-tao, a noted essayist whom Su Tung-p'o admired so much that he wished to take him under his wing, as he did his four other disciples, but Ch'ên refused the honor.

[6] Mi Fei himself.

[7] Wang Chung-chih, a well-known scholar.

[8] Yüan-t'ung is Fa-hsiu, the priest who is supposed to have persuaded Li Lung-mien to give up the painting of horses. He was also called "iron-faced" because of his severity of character.

him is a man in a turban and rustic coat, who is listening. This is Liu Chü-chi.[1] They sit on a piece of grotesque-looking rock, beneath which is a torrent that runs down to the large stream. The murmuring of water as it flows over the rocks, the sound of wind among the bamboos, the natural fragrance of grass and plants, nothing in the world can exceed these in repose and natural beauty! Alas! those that struggle to live in the arena of fame and riches and never have the wisdom to retire from it, what chance have they to enjoy happiness of this kind?

"From Tung-p'o down, the figures number altogether sixteen, and among them are found great essayists, scholars, poets, calligraphists, archaeologists, and an eminent priest. They all stand high above the mundane, and their names create a stir even among the foreign races outside of the four boundaries of China. People in after generations who have the opportunity of looking at this picture, will, I believe, not only appreciate the painting, but can gain some understanding of each and all of these men."

The first point of importance to be noted is that Li did this painting, which from the very nature of its subject must have been an original, in the style of Li Ssŭ-hsün, in colors, for it disposes entirely of the theory often stated in Chinese art literature and frequently repeated in our own, that Lung-mien, in making his original paintings, used only ink. What a lavish use of color it must have been! The yellows, purples, blues, greens, and reds fairly crowd one another; and so exquisite is his art that Mi Fei, in true Taoistic fervor, forgets he is looking at a painting and begins to describe for us the murmur of the water, the sound of the wind in the bamboo, the odors of grasses and plants. Also Mi Fei takes the trouble to inform us that of all these intellectual leaders, only one was a Buddhist, and he quite characteristically is discussing non-existence.

To go into the histories of all these men would carry us too far afield, and

[1] Liu Chü-chi, or Liu Ching, was noted for his prose essays.

we must confine ourselves to a consideration of those who throw most light upon the life and character of Li Lung-mien himself. Perhaps the greatest contrast is Mi Fei, the author of the essay; and it is a tribute to Lung-mien that a man whose whole temperament and work was so opposed to his own should still have been so great an admirer of his. Mi Fei, as his Hua Shih proves, was a very severe critic both of an artist's character and of his works; and though his opinions often had a personal bias, his approval was given only to the mightiest, and then often but grudgingly—especially to men who, like Lung-mien, avowedly followed in thought and technique the traditions laid down by their great predecessors. For Mi Fei was the rebel of his age. In his spirited essay, the Hua Shih, he dismissed great painters like Kuan T'ung[1] and Li Ch'êng[2] with a wave of the hand, because he felt in them a slavish adherence to precedent, and even Lung-mien was reproached for being too much influenced by the style of Wu Tao-tzŭ. He realized, however, that here was a man who was strong enough to transcend the very models that he followed, and he accorded him as much in his deferential silences as in his voiced approval, a respect that few others ever received from him.

None of Li's contemporaries brings out more clearly the nature and scope of his mentality; for Mi Fei, though an amazing calligraphist, an interesting painter, and a critic of acute perception and a vitriolic pen, was as one-sided in his work and as unbalanced in temperament as Lung-mien was broad and poised, both in his art and in his character. The one, moreover, was as egocentric and vain as the other was modest and unpretentious. Of the two, Mi Fei no doubt would make a greater appeal to the modern artist; for he

[1] Great landscape painter, who lived A.D. 907–932.

[2] One of the most famous of Chinese landscape artists of the late tenth century.

was an iconoclast of ability, hated traditions on principle, and did not hesitate to declare that few of the painters of antiquity could equal him. Some of his rapid ink-sketches resemble strongly the impressionistic drawings of to-day, just as the tone of his art criticisms in the Hua Shih sounds, for all the world, like the manifesto of any one of the new art-movements that were lately being issued by our younger men. He is the archetype of all art rebels, an extremely modern-minded man, highly intelligent, and as skilful as he was brilliant. His use of broad masses of modulated ink to indicate surfaces and volumes was a valuable development of the calligraphic technique; and his own paintings in this style, as well as the work of his son, that is so often attributed to him, are among the loveliest and most poetic landscapes that China has ever produced. Magnificent as is his style, we eventually reach the point of saturation, and are bound to admit that as a painter, Mi Fei had but one mood and one manner, whereas Lung-mien had as many styles and strokes as he had ideas. The one artist was specifically aesthetic in his vision, with the exaggerated love of technique that such mentalities invariably develop; the other traversed the whole range of Chinese thought, its history, its philosophy, its literature, its art, and turned from figure painting to landscape, to horse painting, architecture, still-life, or all of these together, in order to express his multitudinous interests in Chinese life and letters.

Mi Fei can be considered an example of the purely Taoistic temperament that is absorbed very largely in self-expression, whereas Lung-mien is more of a Confucian whose interests must include all the cultural manifestations of his race. He is no less original than the eccentric Mi Fei, but he may be said to have individuality, whereas Mi Fei expresses that much narrower thing called personality. In short, Li Lung-mien's character exhibits that element of self-control, that sense of order, of balance, and precision which,

when we find them in our occidental artists, we define as classical, just as Mi Fei's character, in which the passionate element dominates that of reason, we call romantic.

Another man whom Mi Fei was obliged to call master was Su Tung-p'o, the closest friend of Li Lung-mien, whose name flits in and out and across the catalogue like some benign and loving spirit that wishes through all the ages to send forth its revering and appreciative influence, and still remains to insist, in many poems and inscriptions, that the world shall rightly esteem these works of delicate and ennobling beauty. If the soul of Lung-mien rises from the descriptions of his paintings, that of Tung-p'o is scarcely less intertwined with them; the wondrous calligraphy and inspiring thoughts of the poet are so often interpreted by the illustrations of his painter friend that their minds in these common products have become inextricably mingled, and to tell of the life and ideals of Tung-p'o is to draw nearer to the thought and striving of Lung-mien.

XI

Su Tung-p'o, also called Su Shih, was the most prominent figure of his day, for besides being its greatest calligraphist, poet, essayist, and critic, he was, together with Wang An-shih, its most constructive social thinker, whose writings were the terror of the Reformists because of the clarity and the cutting brevity of their style. It was not alone for his remarkable mentality, however, that Li valued Tung-p'o's friendship, but for his companionable qualities, his lovable good nature, his conscientious loyalty, his open-minded and outspoken way of seeing life, and his unfaltering purpose to keep his actions on the same plane as the highest level of his thought. Whenever both men were in the capital, from 1069 when they first met, up to 1094 when Su's ever

frank criticism of the government earned him his final banishment, these two men were constantly together in work or in play, in the examination halls or out among the rocks and streams that they both loved with such reverential wisdom. Many were the paintings they did together of which we still have the record, many the essays that Su wrote and Li illustrated in so superb a manner that later comment could not decide whether the calligraphy and literary style of the former or the pictorial skill of the latter was the more remarkable.[1] Even after his banishment to a remote and uncivilized island, we still find Su making explanatory comments on his friend's paintings,[2] showing that contact between the two men did not cease even under the most difficult circumstances, and fully disproving the statement made by Shao Po[3] that Li forgot to honor his absent friend to the extent of averting his head when he met the banished statesman's sons and relatives in the streets of the capital. Because of the part he played in the public arena of the times, we have a more detailed account of Su Tung-po's life than of that of Li Lung-mien, the retiring scholar and artist, who deliberately spent most of his years in quiet and unrecorded pursuits; and it is therefore helpful in understanding the more hidden life of Lung-mien to see what glorious manner of man was this, the closest of his friends.

Su Shih was born in 1036 and was therefore Li's senior by about ten years. His mother, who had entire charge of his education, must have given him the best of training, for at twenty Su had mastered all the classics and history, and the following year he had passed his final examination for public service. After he had held numerous secretarial appointments in outlying districts, the Emperor Ying-tsung, who greatly admired Su's literary ability, made

[1] See Category I, Nos. 10, 31. Category V, Nos. 5, 14.

[2] Category I, No. 31.

[3] In his *Wên-chien Hou-lu*, Chap. 27, p. 6.

him, in 1065, a member of the Imperial Academy without the usual formality of an examination. When the prime minister demurred, His Majesty replied: "That is a rule for applicants of whom we are doubtful; but who can doubt Su Shih's qualifications?" As Su's father died in this year, he was obliged as a good Confucian to return to his home for the three prescribed years of mourning; when he came back to court in 1069, the face of the world was changed, for a new emperor was on the throne and Wang An-shih had for a year, as prime minister, had full scope for his ambitious plans to reform the political and economic systems of the empire. Su and Wang were old friends; each admired the other's scholarship and literary accomplishments; but they could no more agree on political questions than "ice could agree with burning charcoal." Su's inability to subscribe to Wang's efforts toward greater communization was due to the heavy taxation that would be necessary to meet the costs of such extensive operations and to the complete upheaval it would mean in the free and loosely organized empire which still relied, as China always had, upon the family as the real nucleus of authority.

In spite of the fact that Su found his political opponent at the head of the government, he had not the slightest intention of accommodating his views to those of Wang. His first duty was to work for the interests of the people, his second to protect his emperor from instituting laws that would be inimical to the country's welfare. Aside from these purposes he had no private ends to serve, and consequently he never failed to oppose Wang An-shih whenever he attempted a change of custom that Su considered detrimental to the people or to the emperor's reputation as the guardian of his flock.

Wang was zealous for the progress of his ideas and equally convinced that his were the only happy solutions of the political difficulties. Being a man of

energy and daring who brooked no interference, he eliminated Su Tung-p'o from the situation by appointing him to a small government position outside the capital. However, when Wang, who really seems to have stirred up every one of our modern struggles, began to alter the official examinations with a view to making them more practical by eliminating the classics, Su was horrified. As was his privilege or that of any other citizen, he appeared before the throne to denounce the imperial tendency "to give ear too readily to suggestions from all directions and advance men too hastily to responsible positions." To this protest he added a memorial of ten thousand words which is one of the most straightforward, sharp, and yet persuasive pieces of polemical writing that the world has ever seen.

Wang was so enraged that he ordered the court censors to create charges against the author; Su faced the trial serenely and with utter indifference, refusing to say a single word in his own defence; and as the government could not substantiate the charges of the censors, the case was dismissed. Realizing the power of his opponents, Tung-p'o of his own accord asked for an appointment in the provinces.

In 1076, when Wang himself had been dismissed from the imperial service, his successor, Lü Hui-ch'ing, who had an even greater hostility to Su Shih, tried to have him sentenced to death, but—the emperor interceding—succeeded only in having him banished to the remote district of Huang-chou (Hupeh). Here Su, in spite of the crude, semi-civilized surroundings, refused to make himself unhappy and, dressing "in a turban and a pair of grass slippers, he roamed about in the hills, mixing freely with the farmers and villagers of the neighborhood." Apparently the Emperor Shên-tsung (1068–1085) had a great fondness for him and never forgot him even in banishment, for we find that he wished to recall Su in 1082; this having been made

impossible by opposition of high court officials, he nevertheless issued an autographic note to the following effect: "Su Shih has been too long away in banishment. As there is a dearth of men of talent, we do not consider it expedient to suffer him to remain in idleness any longer. Let him be transferred to Ju-chou [Honan]." Thus the people learned that Su was still in the emperor's favor, but before the decree could be carried out, Shên-tsung had died.

Fortunately the empress dowager, who now took up the reins of government, was just as kindly disposed toward Su. Recalling him, she rapidly advanced him to a fellowship in the Imperial Academy and appointed him preceptor to the youthful Emperor Chê-tsung (1086–1100). Even while holding this court position, Su continued both in speech and in writing his usual attitude toward the government officials, criticizing them, remonstrating with them, and satirizing their doings in the frankest and most undaunted manner whenever he thought it necessary. One day while he was reading with the young emperor, they fell into a discussion concerning existing political conditions, and Su made the following observations: "The present government is exceedingly indiscriminate in rewarding the meritorious and punishing the unworthy, so that the former get no encouragement and the latter no restraint. . . . The Western Hsiâs[1] lately made an inroad into a certain district, causing innumerable losses in killed and missing. The commanding general of that military division has never reported the loss to the court, nor has the court taken the least trouble to investigate the matter. I point this out as typical of conditions throughout the country. I fear that such practices will lead to the gradual decay and disruption of the empire." As the high officials resented these criticisms, Su, realizing that he would be driven away from

[1] A powerful Tartar kingdom founded in 1032.

court, hastily asked for an appointment in the provinces, and was transferred in 1089 to Hang-chou, where he had once before held an official position. The natives welcomed him as an old friend and Su, as during his previous residence, spent his time carrying out several projects in their interest. Among other things he opened up and beautified the famous Western Lake, which, together with his other benefactions, so endeared him to the people that his brother in his epigraph states: "Each house had a scroll of his portrait to which they prayed at every meal and they subscribed for the erection of a 'living temple'[1] in which to worship him."

Su was recalled to court in 1091 to become once more preceptor to the emperor, and in 1093, the year in which the empress dowager died, he held the post of Minister of War. In the meantime the reform party had gathered in strength and, now that his friend and protector was gone, Su was again forced to accept a provincial appointment. Before leaving, however, on his last day of residence in the capital, he wrote a parting memorial for the young emperor as a guide during the political difficulties and confusion that his experienced eye could see developing. Among his last words of warning were these: "The good government and peace of a country depend wholly upon the free communication between the ruler and the ruled. During periods of ideal government, the humblest subject was free to make known to the emperor his wishes and his woes, but when trouble and disorder prevailed, even the officer nearest to the emperor was denied the right to voice his complaints."

This was the last effort that Su was permitted to make in behalf of his sovereign; for in spite of the fact that he withdrew to provincial seclusion, the hatred of his political enemies reached out and, through the emperor's weak-

[1] A temple built in a man's honor during his lifetime.

ness, had him permanently exiled, first to Ying-chou (Kuangtung), then further south to Hui-chou. After three years, the government officials, fearing his powerful personality even at that distance, had him banished to Chüng-chou, Island of Hainan, where he was confined in one of its smaller districts, known in ancient times as Ch'an-chou. It was a wholly uncivilized community, but he speedily won over the natives, who helped him to build a hut of bricks and earth. His brother informs us that he lived under these trying conditions most contentedly, and maintained a happy frame of mind by occupying his time with calligraphy, drawing, reading T'ao Yüan-ming's poems, and composing others after the same style.

The great Hui-tsung, when he ascended the throne in 1100, granted a general amnesty to all political offenders, and Su was permitted to return to civilization; but his health had been broken and he reached his home and family in Ch'ang-chou (Kiangsu) only two months before he died. His last words were: "I have done no wrong in my life, and I shall not fall when I die." This was the answer of the staunch Confucian and Taoist to the Buddhist fear of metempsychosis. When the news of his death was reported, "the natives of Wu and Yüeh [Kiangsu and Chêkiang] shed tears in the market-places; all the men of education and culture came to the house to offer their condolences; a general lamentation there was throughout the whole empire and hundreds of students from the National University came to the monastery where his funeral service was held." Upon the portrait that in their youth Li Lung-mien had made of him,[1] Su, just before his death, penned a short poem which shows that though he maintained what seemed to his contemporaries a happy and contented exterior, he was profoundly saddened by the political conditions of his country and his own inability to

[1] Category II, No. 56.

contend successfully with what he considered the harmful tendencies of the day.

> Your heart is like the dead wood,
> Your body like a drifting boat;
> Pray, what services have you rendered?
> Huang-chou, Hui-chou, Ch' an-chou!

The last line names the provinces to which he was banished in the order of time and remoteness, these being the only results that he could see to his never ending struggle for the welfare of his countrymen.

This was the character of Li Lung-mien's closest associate; and surely a life of such calm and intelligent self-immolation is the best answer to those critics who have found in Confucianism nothing but a narrow office-seeking bureaucracy. Here is no struggle for place and power, no exhibition of personal enmity, no blind adherence to political party or doctrines, but the sacrifice of all that man usually cherishes, of family association, of a peaceful existence, of friendly affections, and of that life amid civilized people and surroundings which must have been incomparably precious to such cultivated sensibilities; all this Tung-p'o surrendered in order to maintain his ideals of justice and do battle for the welfare of his fellow-citizens. In the eyes of this true Confucian, the ruling classes, the culture and learning of the nation—all its spiritual conquests—are of value only inasmuch as they serve the future happiness and well-being of its people; and nowhere can this ideal be more beautifully exemplified than in the lives of those innumerable heroes who, like Su Tung-p'o, were both its products and its victims.

XII

Such a gloriously unselfish life was in part due to the fact that the Chinese were never haunted by our morbid struggle for the saving of the individual soul. Their evolutional view of things made the self as evanescent as a summer cloud; and nowhere do we find this more directly and more beautifully expressed than in Tung-p'o's two essays on "The Brownish-red Wall," with which Lung-mien indicated his agreement by making eight illustrations for the text.[1] The title is taken from the name of a certain hill near the Yangtze, the scene in the third century of an important naval engagement in which many of the contestants greatly distinguished themselves. One moonlit, misty evening, Su was boating on the river near this hill with friends, of whom Li, no doubt, was one; and so exquisite was the beauty of the night that they felt themselves as if alone in a world not their own. One of their number played upon the flageolet a tune so tearful and plaintive that the last note seemed to echo and reëcho for a long, long time before it died away. Dismayed and chilled by this music, Su shook himself and questioned his friend as to the reason for his sadness. The friend thereupon gave a magnificent picture of the ancient naval battle and of its greatest hero, Ts'ao Mêng-tê. After his victory he sailed down the stream at the head of his powerful fleet which, prow to stern, stretched a thousand li, its flying standards so numerous that they almost screened the sky from view; and serenely contemplating the river, cup in hand, spear held crosswise, Ts'ao composed his poem of victory. "Yet where is he to-day?" asks Su's melancholy companion. "As for you and me," he continues, "we have fished and gathered fuel along the river and its isles; we have fraternized with the fishes and been on friendly terms with the deer, and now, sailing in a frail boat, we are pledging one another with

[1] Category V, No. 5.

wine. [We have indeed been happy], yet our life in this world will be no longer than that of the ephemeridae, nor are we [in comparison with our environment] any bigger than a grain of corn in a vast ocean. I deplore the shortness of life. I envy the way in which this river rolls on forever. If only we could roam about arm in arm with the high-soaring rishis! If only we could embrace this bright moon and remain with it as long as it exists! But I know such hopes can never be realized, and I was expressing my regrets in the sad music [that I have just been playing]."

"Oh, my friend," Su replies, "have you never studied the river and the moon? The one rolls on and on, but it never disappears; the other [seems to] wax and wane but [in reality] it never dwindles or increases. Thus if things are considered from the point of view of their changing conditions, even heaven and earth last but for the twinkling of an eye; but if viewed from their unchanging nature, things, as well as we ourselves, may be considered eternal. This being the case, why need you feel envy of any other thing?"

This is a beautiful statement of the Chinese conception of life. He who seeks individual survival has not yet been released from his ego. We live not in and for ourselves, not in the fame which we personally may achieve, but in those who come after us and constitute our eternity, our only true immortality. For this reason we find again and again in Li Lung-mien, as in all Chinese thought, the love for that environment which mirrors our own continuity, and contempt for the personal ambitions and vanities which mark the weaker side of human nature. This is also the thought that created family worship, with its respect for all that is great and beautiful in the past, and its attempt institutionally to preserve that past, as the only real contribution that man can make to the future of his fellow-men.

It is not surprising, in the light of such a monistic theory of life, to find in

Su's comments on various Taoist and Buddhist pictures of Li's, that same absence of sectarian religious fervor that we have already remarked in Lung-mien himself. In the painting of the "Western Garden" Su is described as wearing a Taoist robe, and we find him in one instance[1] calligraphing as a gift for a friend of his the Huang-t'ing Nei-ching scriptures, a very difficult Taoist text, to which Lung-mien added some illustrations. The transaction has not the slightest suggestion of religious piety, for the only comment Su makes is in the nature of a frank appreciation of the great art that he and Li had displayed in the work. "All is done in such a superfine style that it is really a rare treasure in the world." At the end Li adds the portraits of the calligraphist, the friend, and himself. Again Li paints a portrait of Laotzŭ[2] as a gift to another Taoist friend, and Tung-p'o writes a poem in appreciation of the excellence of the picture, the whole emphasis being upon the art, quite regardless of the subject's supposed sanctity. If any doubt were left on the point, it would be eliminated by a letter which Tung-p'o writes à propos of another painting[3] of Li's, this time a Buddhist subject, the Bodhisattwa Ti-tsang, King of Hell, who declared that he would not seek for Buddhaship until he had delivered all the occupants of hell. Su, evidently having been asked by a friend what he thought of Li's picture, writes back: "I have never made a study of this subject. How then can I tell which ancient master's standard he has reached in this picture?" An attitude such as this throws the whole question of religious painting into the intellectual and artistic field.

If the men of this age felt no need of what we should define as a religious sentiment, they did not hesitate to cultivate their minds with every form of human thought that lay at hand. Tung-p'o himself was so keenly interested in the philosophic unity that had resulted through the interaction of Taoism

[1] Category III, No. 20. [2] *Ibid.*, No. 28. [3] *Ibid.*, No. 60.

and Buddhism that he wrote a commentary on Laotzŭ's Tao Tê Ching for the purpose of demonstrating the common origin of the two religions. The numerous works of similar character written at this period to show that Confucianism was in harmony with the other two forms of belief prove the catholicity of the age; though the Sung scholars had not sufficient naïveté to become religious partisans, they had the intellectual breadth to see the value that lies hidden in every sincere manifestation of human thought or sentiment.

As a natural accompaniment of their broad interests, we discover frequently a fine regard and respect for the religious feelings of others. It is recorded of Li Lung-mien's Buddhist painting of "The Ten Great Disciples"[1] that it was done at the request of Tung-p'o in the year 1093, "to pray for his late wife, Wang." Among the less intellectual ranks to which Tung-po's wife may readily have belonged, Buddhism was still a force during the eleventh century and indeed much later, and nothing would be more characteristic than a liberal-minded acceptance on his part of his wife's beliefs, whatever direction they might take. Lung-mien occasionally manifests a similar attitude of respect when he signs a picture "Devoutly drawn,"[2] or "Reverently drawn";[3] but this is only the decorous behavior of a well-mannered people toward subjects of sacred origin.

Though we find scattered through the catalogue of the paintings many expressions from Tung-p'o concerning the great merit of Li Lung-mien as a man and as an artist, we nowhere get a more definite statement of his admiration than in an inscription which he wrote on Li's "Illustrations for the Book of Filial Piety."[4] "We who look at this painting at once feel a sense of duty toward our own parents spring up powerfully within us. The style of the whole certainly does not seem to be inferior to Ku K'ai-chih and Lu

[1] Category III, No. 13. [2] *Ibid.*, No. 33. [3] *Ibid.*, No. 36. [4] Category II, No. 13.

T'an-wei, but when we come to his portrayal of the scenes from the eighteenth chapter,[1] in which the artist purposely brought out in such a delicate manner all that should make a son very sorrowful, we realize that this picture could have been done by none but a superior man of high principle; and in this respect even Ku and Lu, we believe, could not come up to the standard of our artist." As these two ancient masters represent all that is most glorious in the traditions of Chinese art, there could be no higher praise. Nor is this judgment the natural exaggeration of a personal friend, for Su was too great a critic to be influenced in his opinion by extraneous considerations. Though many of the historians are content to say that Li was merely the equal of the ancients, we have the opinions of several other Chinese connoisseurs corroborating Tung-p'o in this assertion that Li Lung-mien was the greatest and most varied of all their artists. The Hua Chi[2] claims that "his transcending genius surpassed that of all other men. Scholars say that he painted horses better than Han Kan, in Buddhistic art his standard was fully up to that of Wu Tao-tzŭ, his landscapes equalled those of Li Ssŭ-hsün, his figure painting that of Han Huang. Nor were their statements exaggerated." This author implies that Li was greater than or equal to the old masters in the special field of each, that he embraced in his production their aggregate merit, and in some ways even surpassed the best that had existed before his day.

One of the most interesting of Tung-p'o's disquisitions on the art of his friend is the essay he wrote on Lung-mien's painting of his "Homestead in the Hills."[3] As these two congenial scholars must have spent much of their time among the scenes which this picture sets forth, we no doubt get from this essay the reflection of things over which they had together lovingly lingered, of Li's method of working, carefully observed by his companion, and of some

[1] The chapter on mourning. [2] Chap. 3, p. 2 b. [3] Category V, No. 14.

of their conversations, as they rambled over the hills, on the topic of art and its relationship to life.

"Lung-mien Chü-shih's depiction of his home in the hills will enable a man of later generations to find his way in the Lung-mien hills no matter where his feet may carry him. It will seem to him as if he were walking among things of which he has dreamed, or as if he were remembering incidents of a former life. The springs, the rocks, and plants that he sees in the hills, he recognizes at once; the fishermen, wood-cutters, and recluses that he meets in the hills, he knows immediately, even though he cannot call them by name.

"Is all this due to the painter's memory? I reply, 'No.' Take a man, for instance, who wants to paint the sun. He does not forget what the sun is like, and yet his picture may look more like that of a penny bun. Again, a man, however drunk he may be, does not try to drink with his nose; nor will a man, in a dream, try to fetch things with his feet. Why? Because instinct will guide him to do these things in the proper way without the aid of a good memory. Thus it is that Chü-shih, when living in the hills, did not let his mind linger upon any particular thing, but his spirit communed with all that he found there, and in this way expanded his knowledge of the arts and industries.

"There are philosophers and there are artists, and there are philosophers who are not artists and cannot express with the hand what they have in mind. But I have seen Chü-shih's 'Scenes from the Hua-Yen Sutra,' which he did purely from imagination, and yet the spirit of his picture is in every way faithful to the teachings of the sutra. Now, if he could make his work so fit the words of the Buddha or the Bodhisattwa that both seem to be the product of one mind, need we be surprised at his depiction of things that he had actually seen with his own eyes?"

When Li and Su painted pictures together, the former is supposed to have done the figures while the latter filled in the scenery. In the records which we have of their joint compositions,[1] Su, in two cases, painted the rocks and, in

[1] Category II, No. 54. Category III, Nos. 4, 25. Category V, No. 18.

one instance, contributed a dead tree, while Po-shih did some clear water with swimming fishes. Judging from the subjects and descriptions, these were not serious pictorial efforts, but sketches done for their own and their friends' amusement, evidently at some festive gathering. Su's younger brother, Tzŭ-yu, and their friends, Liu Chung-yüan and Huang Shan-ku, seem always to have been present; for often they wrote poems or added inscriptions which indicate that these drawings were the product of intimate occasions, to be thought of only as the records of their playful moods.

One such gathering with its diversions is still recorded for us, as the setting happened to be of an official nature. Tung-p'o, having been appointed chief examiner in the first month of the year 1088, invited Li Lung-mien, Huang Shan-ku, and other famous scholars to act as his assistants in reading the papers. Since the examiners were not allowed to leave the building until the work was completed, they were often confined, as in this instance, for more than a month. To pass the time they amused themselves in all sorts of ways; they even called into service the planchette and asked the summoned spirits to write verses, but more often they resorted to their favorite diversions of calligraphy, painting, and poetizing. On one occasion "Po-shih had some pain in his stomach, so to amuse himself he made a picture of a horse rolling in the dust." Huang,[1] thus made aware of his own dusty condition, expressed in verse his strong desire to go home and have his clothes washed. We know of at least two other horse paintings[2] which Li made during this incarceration, whose fame has ever endured with Chinese collectors because in their eyes Lung-mien's pictorial skill is equalled if not surpassed in merit by the poetic and calligraphic genius which Tung-p'o's and Shan-ku's inscriptions display.

[1] Category I, No. 40. [2] *Ibid.*, Nos. 10, 19.

XIII

As we derive most of our information concerning these latter events from Huang Shan-ku, pupil of Tung-p'o, we must turn our attention to this disciple who, next to his master, was the closest friend of Li Lung-mien and one of the outstanding figures of the day. All the men, in fact, whom we have mentioned, except Wang An-shih, who was much older, formed a literary coterie with Tung-p'o for its central figure, toward whom all others looked for criticism and for affectionate guidance. It was in 1078, when Huang Shan-ku was a young and unknown instructor at the National University, that Tung-p'o first discovered his prose and poetical writings, and made him immediately famous throughout the empire by the mere fact of his praise. "It is long since the world has seen compositions such as these," he declared, and from that time on Huang became attached to Tung-p'o as one of the four distinguished scholars in the house of the Sus.[1] As soon as he became associated with Su Shih, Huang Shan-ku was regarded as another enemy by the Reformists, and was forced on several occasions to share his master's fate of banishment to remote provinces. After his graduation in 1067, he held minor positions in the provinces until, in 1080, he was made a district magistrate. From 1085 to 1093 he remained at the capital, holding such positions as junior secretary in the Imperial Library and in the Department of National History. At the end of this period, the reform party being in authority once more, he, like all other Anti-Reformists, was accused of some imaginary insult to the government and was summarily banished to Ch'in-chou in modern Ssŭch'uan. When Hui-tsung ascended the throne, the general amnesty that was declared brought Huang Shan-ku back to the capital as it did so many other political exiles; but his

[1] These four distinguished disciples of Su Tung-p'o were Ch'in Kuan, Chang Lai, Huang Shan-ku, and Ch'ao Wu-chu, all of whom were mentioned in the painting of the "Western Garden."

enemies soon found a pretext in some of his historical writings for ridding themselves of him once more. This time he was sent to Yi-chou, in modern Kuangsi, where he died in 1105, a year before the death of Li Lung-mien.

It was in 1086 that Huang and Li first met in the capital; but they were not unknown to each other before this, for Huang states in an introductory note to one of his poems that during the period 1078–85 he had written a letter to Li, asking him to make a portrait of the poet-painter Wang Wei, whom they both venerated.[1] The friendship between Lung-mien and Shan-ku was not so long continued nor so deep as that with Su Shih. But we are indebted to Shan-ku for much information, particularly about the horse paintings, and for an understanding of the joyous, companionable side of their common lives while the three artists were permitted by a kind fate to spend most of the seven years from 1086 to 1093 at the capital in each other's company. In 1086 the turbulent leaders of both political parties, Wang An-shih the reformer and his opponent, Ssŭ-ma Kuang, had died, and China was permitted one of those few peaceful, prosperous, halycon eras which were ever her most productive ones as well. As for Lung-mien, the catalogue places more of his paintings in this period than at any other, many actually dated, others that we can safely assign to these years through well-substantiated surmise. Nor do we wonder at this when we think of the many beautiful and happy scenes that now tempted the artist's brush. For it was then that he and his gifted friends were often gathered together by an appreciative host in the "Western Garden" for such joyous literary and artistic festivities as Li Lung-mien has himself described; it was the time of long hours spent together in the Academy or in the examination halls, when the poems of one inspired the paintings of the other, or a successful drawing might evoke the calligraphic skill of a third; or,

[1] Category II, No. 16.

pleasantest of all, it was their only opportunity to wander in each other's company through forest and field, under a sky that for a little while, at least, held no threatening clouds, no ominous gloom. Many are the common works that were the product of this period of sunshine; and certain it is that these were the happiest years of their lives, for at the end came renewed banishment for Li's two friends, and though they seem to have maintained a contact through correspondence, there is no indication that they ever saw each other again.

Either Shan-ku was chiefly attracted by his friend's depiction of horses, or Lung-mien happened at the time of their association to prefer this subject, for we find most of Shan-ku's inscriptions on paintings of this sort. A great interest in this field of artistic expression was no personal idiosyncrasy on the part of Lung-mien, but another example of his fine fervor in the matter of national traditions. For the love of the horse, as well as the enthusiasm for its artistic possibilities, is very old indeed in China. The earliest representations of horses which we still possess are on the stones of the Han dynasty; but by that time the appreciation of the horse was already a matter of sport, indicating a long development from some much remoter stage, when, as the only means of locomotion, horses were valued for their usefulness. As early as the Han dynasty, the emperors had celebrated stables and did not hesitate to go to any length to secure the famous animals that were bred by the Tartar tribes. The great Wu-ti, for example, when the people of Ta-yüan[1] refused to surrender to him their wonderful steeds, sent a punitive expedition against them in 104 B.C. under General Li Kuang-li. The campaign lasted four years before the general could return from the Far West with a selection of the coveted "superior" horses in his train. To celebrate this event the emperor had a triumphant song written on "The Heavenly Horses

[1] Modern Ferghana.

of the Extreme Occident," one verse of which Lung-mien used as the basis for a painting.[1]

In Hirth's translation of "The Story of Chang K'ien," we read[2] that "as the Son of Heaven [Wu-ti] had such a fancy for the horses of Ta-yüan, ambassadors sent to procure these horses followed upon one another's heels all along the route. Such missions would be attended by several hundred men. As a rule, more than ten such missions went forward in the course of a year, and at the least five or six. Those sent to distant countries would return home after eight or nine years, those to nearer ones, within a few years." In the same interesting account, it is recorded that the people of Wu-sun, a nomad tribe situated a thousand li northeast of Ta-yüan, who wished to conciliate the powerful Han Empire, at one time presented a marriage gift of a thousand horses, which so mollified the Chinese that they sent the Princess of Kiang-tu, a relative of the emperor, to be the consort of the King of Wu-sun. These horses, however, were not prized so highly as the larger and stronger type from Ta-yüan; and when the Emperor Hsüan-ti in 65 B.C. again succeeded in overawing this country, his chief reason for rejoicing was the fact that he obtained as tribute their renowned "Dragon-like" horse.[3]

Scarcely any of the stone pictures of this period that has come down to us fails to include one or more horses in its representations. It is amusing to think that Buddhism is supposed to have introduced the love of animals into a country where a man's horse was his friend centuries before Buddhism existed. Long before its advent in China, the imperial stables harbored famous chargers whose reputations for beauty or speed passed down into history as would the ability or character of a great person. The "Dragon-like" horse, the "Purple Swallow," the "Phoenix-headed" horse from Khotan, and the "Brocade-

[1] Category I, No. 19. [2] Page 103. [3] Category I, No. 11.

legged" horse from Tung T'an, were each an individuality, as distinct and definite in the minds of this horse-loving race as that of some well-known scholar or poet. The names of these horses, particularly those that "sweated blood" and "travelled a thousand leagues a day," are sometimes thought to be mere transliterations of their foreign names and occasionally this may be so, but usually these appellations are too descriptive and poetical to leave any doubt that their origin and significance are both Chinese.

From art records we learn that, after the Han dynasty, the tradition of horse painting was nobly maintained by such eminent artists as Lu T'an-wei;[1] but the next great epoch in which the horse was especially celebrated was the reign of the Emperor Ming-huang (A.D. 712–756). His stud, which is said to have included forty thousand specimens, was no less famous than that of his Han predecessors; and the "Eight Horses of the Emperor Ming-huang"[2] was in his time and ever remained a favorite subject with Chinese painters. Polo was a popular sport, played, it appears, even by the women of the court,[3] and another diversion of this artistic emperor was the development of a troupe of acrobatic riders. A painting in my collection which brings back most vividly this life-loving, pleasure-seeking period, is an evocation by the contemporary artist Chang Hsüan of the Imperial Park, while the sensitive and dreamy monarch, surrounded by a small group of the loveliest, most fragile-looking women companions, surveys with mild attention a wildly galloping charger upon whose side clings, with superhuman skill, the slender form of a female musician. It is an almost impossible feat of horsemanship, but the group on the bamboo balcony, half shaded by the branches of gracefully drooping willows, is but gentle in its interest and judicial in its attitude.

Only in studying the paintings of this age can we recreate for ourselves

[1] Fifth century figure painter. [2] Category I, No. 26. [3] Category II, No. 58.

the intense love of the horse which no doubt the Tartars first developed and transferred to their more civilized neighbors. In these horse portraits, for such they were, the manes are carefully combed, the coat is curried to an amazing gloss, the heads are almost human in their expressiveness, and marvellous ornaments, even rich jewels, hang suspended from the beautifully arched necks. Beside them, but quite subsidiary in importance, are represented the proud owners, whose eyes, riveted upon their pets, glow with an intensity of affectionate admiration; the impression of perfect understanding between master and beast is so convincing that these paintings vie in their appeal with any portrayal of purely human relationships.

It is therefore not surprising that such powerful emotions should have stimulated the very greatest talents and created during this period the three artists who (with the exception of Li himself) were the greatest of China's horse painters, Ts'ao Pa and his two pupils, Ch'ên Hung and Han Kan. The work of the T'ang masters, though highly original, was based directly upon the Han models in stone, and the products of the T'ang painters were copied and studied by Li Lung-mien, as he himself proudly acknowledges. He also copied the Tartar horse painters, of whom there were not a few that attained distinction;[1] but we find a general agreement among the Chinese critics that Li's horse paintings were quite unique in the history of this art and excel those of any painter who came before or after him. The only follower who deserves to be mentioned is Chao Mêng-fu of the Yüan dynasty; but this painter declares frankly that he never attained the skill of his master, Li Lung-mien, who stands unquestionably first in the development of this branch of Chinese pictorial art.

The usual miraculous tales of his skill are found in contemporary literature.

[1] Category I, No. 14. Category IV, No. 7.

The most amusing is a story told by Tsêng Yü concerning Huang Shan-ku's inscription on Lung-mien's scroll of "The Heavenly Horses."[1] Tsêng-Yü called upon Shan-ku at the capital in the year 1090, and found him in the act of penning an inscription on Li's "T'ien-Ma T'u." Huang said to him: "Such a strange thing has happened! Po-shih made a picture of the horse 'Man-ch'üan-hua'[2] in the imperial stud, and no sooner had he finished his painting than the horse died. It seems that all the vital force of the horse was taken out of it by Po-shih's brush."

As we have already seen in the quotation from Li's contemporary, Hui Hung, "it was comparatively easy to obtain gold in the capital, but to obtain Po-shih's horse painting was almost an impossibility." To the grooms of the royal stables, however, Lung-mien gladly gave his paintings in return for their keen appreciation of his skill. Days and days did he spend in the company of these men and their beautiful charges. In Wu-li-pu's "Chats on Poetry"[3] we can feel his enthusiasm for man and beast as he tells in his own words how he loved to haunt the imperial training quarters: "At the beginning of Yüan-fêng period [A.D. 1078–1085], I, Kung-lin, having finished my work as a reader of the examination papers in the Southern Academy, again took part in helping with the Court Examination which was held at the entrance of the Chi-Ying Palace. This gave me opportunities of visiting the Royal Guard's quarters. While there, I saw the men practising archery on flying horses, playing the games of hitting the hanging ball and breaking the willow branches.[4] Both the men and the horses were big and strong, the choicest specimens in the world. It happened just then that his majesty, the emperor, had appointed a certain day on which to visit the Pao-tsui Park.

[1] Perhaps wild horses. See Category I, No. 36.

[2] Literally, "Full-stream-flower."

[3] Page 34 b.

[4] See also Category I, No. 7.

Therefore the strictest supervision of the practising was exercised, and all the hits and misses carefully noted. Thus every day and all day without pause, until the evening shadows fell upon the scene, I had the pleasure of watching this entertainment to my heart's content."

That Su Tung-p'o was also interested in Li's horse paintings is evident from the fact that one of his most lauded pieces of calligraphy was an inscription which he wrote in the year 1097 while in remote banishment, in appreciation of Lung-mien's "Picture of Three Horses."[1] Apparently the beautiful western steeds were still a favorite form of tribute, even in the Sung dynasty, for in this painting are shown three famous horses presented to the Emperor Chê-tsung by Thibet and Turkestan, and leading them a Thibetan chieftain, Kuei-Chang-Ch'ing-Yi-Chieh by name, who had been captured on one of the punitive expeditions.

The story of Li's renunciation of his passion for horse painting in favor of portrayals of Buddhist saints is, as we have already shown, untrue; but, more than this, Li defied the Buddhist attitude in the matter by making a picture of the famous Buddhist priest, Tao-lin,[2] in the act of judging horses. This was a terrible affront to the whole sect, since Buddhists were not supposed to take an interest in horses, much less rear them, as Tao-lin was fond of doing; but it is only one of several instances in which Lung-mien could not resist making good-natured fun of his Buddhistic friends.

The Buddhists were anxious to create and repeat the fable of Li's renunciation of his passion for horse painting, because this particular art, as we have just seen, established him squarely within an historical Chinese tradition. Not only did they wish to clear one of their most distinguished religious artists of any lay contamination, especially so pagan a one as horse

[1] Category I, No. 31. [2] Lived *c.* A.D. 314–366. See Category I, No. 2.

painting, but they disliked the idea that Li Lung-mien, through this exercise of his genius, placed himself definitely under the native Confucian influence rather than that of Buddhism. What became of the importance of the religious inspiration, if the man who so perfectly portrayed their most sacred conceptions could exhibit an equal degree of skill in depicting what to them was an abhorred and vulgar subject? Whatever may be said of the Buddhists, it cannot be claimed that they were ever eclectic; and they were bound to try to free Li Lung-mien, at least as far as posterity was concerned, from this taint of Confucianism, of which his great reputation as a horse painter was a constant and a peculiarly distasteful reminder.

Closely associated with the horse paintings are those of "foreign tribes." Often it is difficult to determine whether a picture belongs to one category or the other, as many of the horses are delineated with the portraits of foreign chieftains, and the Tartar and other tribesmen are inevitably accompanied by their constant associate, the horse.[1] Another reason why Lung-mien and other Chinese artists particularly loved to paint pictures of foreign lands lay in the opportunity which these unknown people gave them to allow free play to their imaginations. They could invent extraordinary animals to their heart's content, some lion-faced, ox-hoofed, and with horns, others "with a donkey face, pig's ears, horse's hoofs, and a long mane"; and they could dress the human figures in delightfully impossible clothes, with bushy beards and bamboo headgear, to say nothing of the pleasure of drawing their foreign and strange-looking features and expressions.[2] There is no question that the Taoist and Buddhist subjects had precisely the same attraction for the Chinese painters, with the added incentive that, in these fields, aside from certain traditions, there was even less of hampering fact to hinder fancy from roaming as it listed.

[1] Category IV, Nos. 1, 2, 7. [2] *Ibid.*, No. 5.

Indeed, in many of the representations of Lohans, admittedly so in those of Kuan-hsiu,[1] the faces are so extraordinary because the painter was striving for a strange atmosphere that should convey the characteristics of the foreign priests, Tartar or Indian, as the case might be. The Tartar influence on Chinese art is a very fascinating subject and from the merely aesthetic point of view certainly worthy of as much attention as the more discussed and, because of its historical associations, perhaps more important question of the Buddhist influence.

Second only in importance to the descriptions of the horse paintings are Huang Shan-ku's accounts of the informal gatherings of the literary and artistic men who were his and Li Lung-mien's associates. The record of one of their reunions at the Academy describes the interest which he and his fellow-scholars took in Li Lung-mien's art, how carefully they analyzed his style, and how highly they appreciated his exact habits of work. The story is told à propos of Li's painting, "Better Than,"[2] the title of which is taken from a Confucian quotation which asserts that even dice-playing and chess-playing are better occupations than inaction. "During the period of Yüan-yu (1086–1093), Huang T'ing-chien, Ch'in Kuan, and several other gentlemen, one day when they were in the Imperial Academy and had nothing to do, amused themselves by examining paintings. Shan-ku brought forth a picture by Li Lung-mien, under the title 'Better Than.' In this picture is depicted a group of men of the chess and dice-playing type. There are about six or seven men around a board busy with the game of throwing dice into a bowl. In the bowl, five black dice may be seen, while the sixth is still whirling around. One of the men, looking down into the bowl, is shouting very excitedly. All the others who are watching seem to change color and are standing up. In its

[1] A noted figure painter who lived *c.* A.D. 936. [2] Category II, No. 19.

composition and its delineation of manners and expressions, all was done with consummate skill. While they were extolling the picture to the skies, Tung-p'o came in and, casting a glance at it, said: 'Why, Li Lung-mien is a man of the world; how is it, then, that he has adopted the way of the people of Min [Fu-kien] in pronouncing a word?' All the gentlemen were surprised and asked him to explain himself. Tung-p'o said: 'Within the Four Seas, no matter in what dialect, the word "Lu"[1] has ever been pronounced with the lips closed, while the Min dialect speaks the word with the lips wide open. Now, in that bowl all the dice except one are "six," and that one is still unsettled. It stands to reason that you should call "six"; yet the man who is shouting has his mouth open. Is n't that reasonable?' Lung-mien, on hearing this, smilingly admitted that he [Tung-p'o] was right."

On another of their excursions *à trois*, Tung-p'o and Li painted a picture[2] to which they gave the title "The Priest of Hsüan-sha Fears his own Shadow Reflected in the Water," and Shan-ku explained its meaning in a poem. It seems, when young, this priest had a passion for angling which he had to renounce upon becoming a Buddhist. In the painting he was shown leaning against a tree, looking contemplatively and sorrowfully at some fishes swimming about in a pool at his feet. Shan-ku interprets his state of mind in a way that gives this painting a Daumier-like irony. Though he has achieved indifference to all things of this world, it worries him to think that at heart he is still an angler and that the fishes know him as his old self. No doubt the hero of the story was some friend of theirs whom they wished thus to satirize for an over zealous devotion to Buddhism.

Angling, though forbidden by Buddhist teaching, was the favorite sport of the Chinese scholar; and as such it figures again and again in Li Lung-mien's

[1] Or "liu," meaning "six." [2] Category III, No. 25.

catalogue as well as in the records of almost any period of Chinese history. It was ever a favorite Taoist diversion but, because of its ancient historical character, has its decidedly Confucian aspect as well. As early as 1122 B.C. we find, in the history of the Chou dynasty, minute directions given by a farmer to the Premier Lü Shang on the finer points of this sport, and succeeding chronicles are replete with fishing anecdotes and the lives of famous fishermen from whom kings often sought hints for the improvement of their skill. Later it became a favorite refuge of the Taoistically minded from the sordid thoughts of a worldly life; they felt that the quietude which angling demands soothed a confused mind, and that the concentration which it required made them forget the material side of existence. For these spiritual fishermen, the catch was a matter of indifference; and many were the scholars who used no bait in order that their enjoyment might not be rudely interrupted by an unexpected bite.

Huang Shan-ku, in one of his poems, tells of a painting which Lung-mien did of "The Fishing-places of Yen Tzŭ-ling,"[1] a famous scholar and a schoolmate of the Emperor Kuang-wu.[2] When Kuang-wu ascended the throne, Yen hid himself, but the emperor sought him out and begged him to come to court. Yen was finally persuaded to consent, and the two friends now passed their time together as in their youth; but when Kuang tried to bestow a title upon Yen, he refused it and fled to the Fu-ch'un Hills in Chêkiang, where he busied himself with farming and fishing. At two of his favorite fishing places on the Ch'ien-t'ang River, platforms were raised after his death to recall to people's minds the free spirit and unworldly aims of the man who preferred this peaceful sport, so full of lessons of self-control, to life at court with an emperor's favor and friendship.

[1] Category V, No. 19. [2] Lived A.D. 25–57.

XIV

THUS it becomes noticeable through much repetition that the preferred companions of Li's daily life were men who lived and died in government service; whereas the heroes of the past whom he most loved to portray were those who frequently took pride in scorning the bondage, not only of official duties, but of any community existence. His close friends, Wang An-shih, Su Shih, Su Chê, and Huang Shan-ku, were the leading political and social thinkers of their day, men who spent their whole lives, their energy, and their great talents in promulgating those theories of government in which they believed, and opposing fearlessly those which they considered harmful to the country's welfare. Yet we see these statesmen uniting with Lung-mien in his admiration for the great Taoist sages of antiquity, such as Yen Tzŭ-ling, Hsi K'ang, T'ao Hung-ching, Chang Kuo, and others not yet mentioned, whose rebellious mentality seems quite opposed in character to theirs. In a consideration of these facts—the official mode of life of the scholars of the Sung period, and the difference between their pursuits and those of the ancient scholars whom they most admired—we can see reflected the whole development of Chinese thought; and, with Lung-mien's catalogue as our basis, we shall now follow some of the changes that took place from the period of Taoist predominance in the third and fourth centuries to the gradual rise in the T'ang dynasty and the final domination in the Sung dynasty of the Confucian conception of life's obligations. In the Chin dynasty (A.D. 265–420), the time of "The Seven Wise Men of the Bamboo Grove," the scholar, with occasional exceptions, gave little or no direct service to the state, but retired to some solitude and created literature that still constitutes an important part of China's classics. Under the T'angs the scholars and poets were of the world, were more amenable to official duties, but left both as soon as possible in order to live what remained

of their days, as Wang Wei did, in a retired spot among the hills. In the Sung dynasty scholars and poets alike were the servants of their government until death or disease, as in Lung-mien's case, released them. The fusion of Taoism and Confucianism had become perfected and men again sought liberty not for themselves alone, but for their fellow-men as well.

Just as the political situation after the disruption of the Han Empire was responsible for the sudden burgeoning of Taoism, so the political turn of events again made possible the gradual revival of the Confucian ideal. In the third and fourth centuries, the Taoist tendency to turn one's back on the world had been strengthened by disheartening dissensions, rivalries, and constant warfare between the petty states, by rapidly changing dynasties and rulers, by powerful Tartar aggressions, and by a general chaos with which the individual was powerless to cope. When T'ai-tsung, the second ruler of the house of T'ang, reëstablished order on Confucian lines, the scholars began to emerge once more into public places; and, by the advent of the Sung dynasty, the idea of official service was so strong that Taoism remained only as a mental leaven in a purely Confucian state, creating with its more individual, more poetic attitude, an emotionalized intellectualism, a unification of the human faculties, such as the world has probably never so clearly experienced. These were the three great services of Taoism to the Chinese state: first, that it helped to keep Confucianism elastic, self-critical, and progressive; secondly, that it maintained the integrity of the individual in a social organization that knew no smaller unit than the family; and lastly, that it helped to nullify Buddhistic subjectivity by insisting upon the importance of the environment. As long as Taoism remained a creative stimulus, Confucianism also developed; if, at its first strong efflorescence, it helped to increase the disorder in which the Chinese Empire then found itself, if at all times it acted as a centrifugal

force in the functioning of the state, these things were the inevitable by-products of a philosophy of inaction and freedom, and a highly essential element in a society that tended always to become too centralized and too firmly stabilized. That this individualism was an invaluable leaven, once the Confucian state was reëstablished, is only too clearly demonstrated; for when Taoism waned, when the great increase of China's uneducated masses caused only its magic side to survive, Confucianism became rigid, became the unalterable, narrow, bureaucratic system which has distorted for western minds the wise and benevolent social organization which it maintained for so many hundreds of years.

In order to illustrate this development from Chin Taoism to Sung Confucianism, let us first contrast the character of Li Lung-mien with that of one of the great early Taoists, and then trace the changes that took place in the lives and temperaments of the prominent literary men that intervened. There is no better way of understanding what happened in China between the fourth and the eleventh centuries than by comparing Li Lung-mien's life and his work, as we now know it, with the life and work of the greatest of all his heroes, the poet-philosopher T'ao Yüan-ming;[1] for each can be fairly considered the epitome of the social and intellectual conditions of his time, each represents the best and bravest aspirations of his day. No less than eight of the paintings[2] are found to bear T'ao Yüan-ming's name; and if the frequency with which Li has pictured the many well-known incidents of this poet's life can be taken as a criterion, then T'ao Yüan-ming is the man who stands foremost among all the ancients in his admiration, and perhaps, if we are justified in considering Li Lung-mien as typical, foremost in the hearts of all Chinese artists and scholars.

[1] Lived A.D. 365–427. [2] Category II, Nos. 6, 22, 23, 46, 54, 55, 63, 73.

T'ao Yüan-ming, cognomen Yüan-liang, who also called himself Ch'ien or "The Secluded One" after the downfall of the Chin dynasty, came of a highly cultured family whose members, from generation to generation, beginning at about the second century B.C., had held high government positions, as was the custom with the distinguished men of Han. His great-grandfather, T'ao K'an, one of the most noteworthy figures in Chinese history, had been commander-in-chief of a big province,[1] and one of his most celebrated sayings typifies the alert and active spirit of the Han dynasty: "Yü the Great did not waste an inch of shadow.[2] We, therefore [who are so inferior to him] must not waste a tenth of an inch of shadow." The father of Yüan-ming, whose life coincided with the years just after the disruption of the Han Empire, was the first of his line to show signs of a world-weary and retiring temperament, and his son inherited from him much of his seclusion-loving character. This leap from prominent government official to recluse in three generations of a single family bears out the contention that the sudden development of Taoism during these centuries was due to the disturbed political conditions, and indicates that the extreme individualism and eccentricities of the Chinese scholars in later times are largely due to the fact that their ancestors for four centuries were driven to such behavior through lack of an efficient central government.

Yüan-ming's chief claim to fame rests upon a poetical-prose essay entitled "Homeward Let Me Turn,"[3] which has ever remained one of the most important pieces of Chinese literature. It is an exquisite crystallization of the constantly growing tendency of the Chin scholars to turn their backs upon the strife and pettiness of the turbulent political world, to seek instead the calm and the independence of an isolated existence. No greater piece of liter-

[1] Modern Honan. [2] Meaning, of course, that he wasted no time. [3] Category II, No. 23.

ature has been produced to express the Taoist side of the Chinese mentality, and it is no exaggeration to say that, in its influence and moral effect upon men of every religious belief and philosophical school in China, it is not a whit inferior to the Canons left by the great sages or their apostles. In reading the famous letter of the Taoist Hsi K'ang, one feels an individual and personal contact with this type of mind; but in Yüan-ming's "Kuei-Ch'ü-Lai," there is something universal, something that speaks of an age-long development and the gathered emotions of all the poets and scholar-recluses who had felt the same overpowering need of freedom. It interprets in a few sentences the poetry, the force, and the profundity of an irresistible racial tendency. Not only Yüan-ming, but an unending line of the wisest and sweetest, most contented of human minds, speaks in this essay of its early passionate struggle with the vanities of life and its final glad solution of the problem.

In his introduction the author explains the subject of the essay and how it came to be written:

"My family has ever been poor. Even with the produce of our farm, our wants have not always been sufficiently supplied. I hated to go far away in search of a position, but finding that the magistracy of P'êng-tsê is only about one hundred li from home, I applied for the post. Before having held it very long, I was homesick and anxious to return. The fact is that one really cannot force one's self to do what is not in one's nature, and to act contrary to one's nature is hateful even though one is threatened with the immediate danger of hunger and cold. Consequently, I dismissed myself from my official post, having held it only about eighty days. And I write this to give vent to my feelings, entitling my composition 'Homeward Let Me Turn.'"

The joyous outburst of a great spirit, freed from unendurable bondage, is difficult to reproduce in any language but its own; and the very form in which it is cast, a poem in rhymed prose, to say nothing of the exquisiteness of the

language with its wealth of delicate allusion, makes it impossible to hope to give in translation more than the shell of this beautiful composition, without even so much as the shell's resonance.

"Homeward let me turn! My field and garden lie neglected; why should I not return? I have already suffered my mind to be enslaved by my body; but why give myself up to sorrow and regret?

"Let the past be the past. The future is easily within my reach. I may have lost my way, but I have not strayed far from the path and I am convinced that my present course is right, the one of yesterday wrong.

"My boat, rocking lightly, drifts gently onward; a breeze stirs my cloak pleasantly. I ask a fellow-traveller to direct me, for alas, the light of dawn shines but dimly. At last I see my house, my own! In ecstasy I run forward.

"Joyously do my servants issue forth to meet me and my children stand eagerly waiting at the gate. My Three Paths[1] have fallen into ruins, but my pine-tree and chrysanthemums still flourish. I enter the house holding my little ones by the hand, and lo, my jars are full of wine. Taking a jug and cup, I beguile myself with drink; a glance at the trees in the court brightens my expression. I lean against the southern window, enjoying my liberty; surely in the smallest nook, peace and repose are easily found.

"My daily saunterings in the garden again become a pleasant habit. There is a gate, but it is often closed. Staff in hand, I wander about at leisure; time and again I lift my head and scan the distant horizon to behold the clouds issuing lazily forth from the mountain crags, and the birds returning home weary of their flight. The dusky shadows fall and still I linger beneath the lonesome pine.

[1] "The Three Paths" were originated by Chiang Hsü, a renowned military governor of Yen-chou (Shantung), who in A.D. 6 resigned his exalted position, just as Yüan-ming had resigned his petty one, in the quest of a peaceful and unambitious existence. He had his garden-gate choked up with thistles and thorny branches, and constructed in his bamboo grove three winding paths through which he roamed in meditation for the rest of his life without ever emerging to mingle with the outer world. His example became famous throughout the land, and Yüan-ming is only one of many scholars who sought to honor his memory by constructing an identical maze within their bamboo groves.

"Home again! I avoid both friends and acquaintances. Since the world and I are strangers, why should I seek them? I enjoy the affectionate conversation of my relatives and take pleasure in my sorrow-dispelling harp and books.

"The farmers tell me that spring is here. In the western field there will be work to do. Sometimes I order the cart curtained for use; sometimes I row a lonely boat; either I thread along the mountain stream to seek the valley or laboriously climb the precipice by abrupt ascents. The trees are merrily showing signs of life. Springs begin to flow in rivulets. All things are ready to begin anew, but I, alas, am approaching the end. So be it! We cannot expect to enjoy a long existence in this universe. I shall not let such thoughts disturb me. Why ask myself whither I shall go? Wealth and honor I do not desire and the Land of the Immortals is equally beyond my reach.

"Therefore I intend to enjoy these beautiful days. Either I wander forth alone, or laying aside my staff, I hoe and cultivate the soil; now and again I ascend the eastern mound, whistling as I go, or resting close by some clear stream, I compose my poems.

"Assuredly my only course now is to live in accord with nature until my debt is paid through the enjoyment of my allotted years without question or doubt."

Nothing could be more beautiful than that last passage, nothing more characteristically Chinese. We owe it to nature to enjoy life! Small wonder that such a race could write poetry and paint flowers and landscapes as no one else ever did.

An essay such as this illustrates how even the most Taoistic mentality was shot through with Confucian learning, just as no Confucian was without his Taoist leanings. Though the predominant tone of this essay is Taoistic, the various annotations at the end of each line by later Chinese critics, showing the sources which Yüan-ming used for the quotations that are obligatory in a scholarly style, refer almost to as many Confucian as Taoist texts. The process of amalgamation between the two schools began, indeed, very much

earlier than this, for we find in the work of many a scholar to whom Yüan-ming's lines refer, that same interspersion of phrases and ideas from either school that characterizes his own literary productions.

Li Lung-mien made several famous paintings to illustrate this essay, one of which it brought Mr. Freer great happiness to discover shortly before his death. As the commentators say that Li's illustrations of the Kuei-Ch'ü-Lai have "been treasured and studied in every house and home,"[1] either he made many copies or one set of the paintings must have had a very wide circulation. From an inscription on the painting which Mr. Freer acquired, we learn that Lung-mien had made a series of small screens of the same subject; and it is also interesting to note that the well-known collector Wang Hsing-chih had his copy of the painting, together with Li's calligraphy of the entire essay, transferred to a stone wall in Cho-yü Square. Unfortunately we have no means of finding out where Cho-yü Square may be; but let us hope that it will some day be discovered with Lung-mien's pictures and his own version of Yüan-ming's immortal essay still cut upon the face of the wall.

A biography which T'ao Yüan-ming wrote of a "Mr. Five-Willow-Trees" is generally considered an exact description of his own character and life. He was "serene, quiet, and a man of few words. He did not aspire to worldly honors or riches. Fond as he was of reading, he disliked giving himself the trouble of finding out the exact sense of difficult passages; but whenever he made a pleasant discovery, he was so transported with joy that he neglected his meals. He loved wine, but, being poor, was often without the means of obtaining any. Well aware of this fact, his relatives and old friends would

[1] The Hsüan-ho Hua-p'u has already been quoted as using the same interest-provoking phrase that "many of his paintings have had a wide circulation, and everybody can find an opportunity of examining them personally." Mr. Freer's scroll is evidently a copy from the designs of some T'ang painter and has therefore not been reproduced among the illustrations.

often procure wine and invite him to their houses. At every such invitation he would invariably drink up all that his host had, with the definite purpose of making himself drunk. Having reached that condition, he would take himself off, without giving the least thought [to the propriety of staying a little while after the repast].

"His residence was just a space confined within walls, empty and dingy, incapable of sheltering him even from the wind and sunshine. His attire consisted of a short coat of very coarse cloth somewhat tattered, and his food-baskets were destitute time and again of anything. Yet he lived in utter complacency.

"He used to write to amuse himself, and all that he wrote revealed much of the man's nature and ideals. He was completely oblivious of all sense of loss or gain and thus lived until his debt to nature was paid."

After retiring from his magistracy, Yüan-ming lived in a village called Li-li and spent his time reading, writing, and philosophizing, with just enough labor in the fields to keep himself and his family alive. His wife, fortunately, was in perfect accord with this ideal of simple living and high thinking, and was quite content to perform the severest labor and suffer any misery. Hence the couple could often be seen working away in their field, the husband plowing in front while his wife followed him with the hoe. He liked, at times, to visit the Buddhist scholars who had banded themselves together as "The White Lotus Club"[1] in a nearby valley, but Fenollosa is in error when he says that T'ao Yüan-ming was a Buddhist and a member of the club. Attracted by the literary ability of the club members, he would often seek their society; the head priest, Hui-yüan, tried to persuade him to join them, but Yüan-ming never fully approved of the organization and "would sometimes take himself off immediately with eyebrows puckered, in spite of Hui-yüan's

[1] Category III, No. 29.

attempts to make him stay." On one occasion T'ao Yüan-ming actually promised to join, on condition that they would furnish him with wine whenever he came to visit them. To this Hui-yüan, in order to secure his presence, agreed; the genial priest even sold poems in order to buy drink for Yüan-ming, but on arriving there one day and finding that no wine was forthcoming, T'ao straightway went home.

In Li Lung-mien's illustrations of Yüan-ming's "Ideal Ways of Living,"[1] which were in each case accompanied by one of his poems, Li pictures him first in the act of filtering some newly brewed wine through his cap. This he did at a neighborly drinking-party in order to remove the dregs from his wine, and as soon as he had filtered it, back went the cap on his head, one supposes, dregs and all; meaningless as such a picture is to us, it must not be forgotten that so Taoistic an indifference to the forms of life seemed daringly admirable and unconventional to a race which had been steeped since time immemorial in ceremonial and the niceties of behavior. In addition to several pictures that show Yüan-ming diverting himself with calligraphy, reading, talking, there is one in which he is playing the scholar's harp. Now it is popularly known that he never troubled to learn to play this instrument, but when his friends gathered about him, he would have it brought out, and while his fingers rested on the strings he would chant:

> "If I but understand the poetry of the harp,
> Why need I bother about the tones of its strings?"

He was a most prolific writer; but next in fame to his "Kuei-Ch'ü-Lai" and most indicative of the mood of the times is a poetical essay entitled "A Narrative Description of the Fountain Among Peach Blossoms." It is a simple

[1] Category II, No. 6.

allegory of the yearning of the scholars that lived in this turbulent era for a refuge from the sordid political and military struggles with which they were surrounded,[1] and at the same time it conceals a protest against the oppressions that the rulers of Sung visited upon the conquered Chin kingdom, of which Yüan-ming was a subject. The language of the original is superb, and the translation renders only its barest statement of fact; but this bare statement is itself of moment, as it helps us to realize the insatiable longing for a just and united government that haunted the thoughtful men of this period. Many were the later scholars who loved to use this allegory as a subject for their poems, especially Wang Wei, who versified the whole of T'ao's prose version, and many the painters who have striven again and again to delineate the beckoning atmosphere of "The Peach Blossom Fountain."

"During the reign of T'ai-yüan[2] of the Chin period, a native of Wu-ling, whose vocation it was to fish for a living, was steering down a stream. On and on he went, losing all sense of the distance he had travelled. Then, suddenly, he came upon a grove of peach blossoms. On both banks for several hundred paces, he could see no other tree amidst the grove; the grass, fresh and lovely, was dotted here and there by the blossoms that were falling from the branches.The fisherman was so astonished that he continued in the hope of reaching the end of the grove. At last it came to an end at the source of the stream, and there he found a hill. In the hillside was a small opening, in which he thought he detected a glimmer of light. He left his boat and entered the cave. At first, it proved to be very narrow, barely big enough to allow the passage of a man, but, after he had walked several dozen paces, it suddenly opened out to a wide and

[1] It is interesting to note that H. G. Wells in *Men Like Gods* has made exactly the same sort of response to the present period of upheaval. Only his antiseptic Utopia seems less alluring than this simpler one. Robert Flint, a Scotch scholar, has said: "It is in their times of sorest depression that nations usually indulge most in dreams of a better future and that their imaginations produce most freely social ideals and utopias."

[2] A.D. 376–396.

sunny plain. Here the country was flat and extensive, with cottages scattered about; and there were also rich farm-lands, lovely ponds, mulberry-trees, bamboos, and the like. Paths running in all directions indicated a free communication; the crowing of cocks and the barking of dogs[1] could be heard all around; the men and women that were passing to and fro, or working, were dressed in a style exactly like that of the people in the outer world; but the faces of all, old and young alike, shone with happiness and content. Presently one of them espied the stranger, and in great amazement, questioned him whence he had come. The fisherman answered him, and straightway the questioner carried the stranger off to his home, bringing out wine, killing a fowl, and preparing him a dinner. In the mean time, the whole village had heard of the stranger's presence, and all the good folk turned out to see him, asking him every sort of question. As for themselves, they declared that their forefathers, in escaping from the trouble and suffering under the Ch'in rule,[2] had first come, with their wives, sons, and the other people of their district, to this fairyland and had refused to leave; thus they had been completely cut off from the outside world. 'And what is the present dynasty?' asked they of the stranger; they seemed not to have heard of the Hans, let alone the Weis[3] and the Chins. The fisherman repeated to them in some detail what he himself knew; and they all sighed with regret. Then everybody invited the stranger, and entertained him with wine and food. After a few days' stay, he took leave of these people, who said to him, 'You may spare yourself the trouble of informing the outside world of this place.' When he was out of the cave, he found his boat, and steered back over the course by which he had come, carefully leaving signs everywhere as he went along. In due time he reached his district city, and went to the prefect to make a report of his experience. The official sent a man with him to locate the place by means of the marks that he had left; but, try as they would, they failed to hit upon the proper route. Liu Tzu[4] of Nan-yang, a man of high ideal and character, on hearing the

[1] "The crowing of cocks and the barking of dogs" is a classical Chinese literary term to indicate a peaceful domesticity.

[2] 221–207 B.C. [3] A.D. 220–265. [4] Also called Liu Lin-chih, a scholar-recluse.

report, joyously set out for this land; but, before he could carry out his wish, he fell ill and died! Since that, no one else has made any further attempt to discover its whereabouts."

We need consider only two more of the paintings which Li made of T'ao Yüan-ming, the first, which he vaguely entitled "The Portrait of a Scholar-Recluse,"[1] and the second, "T'ao Yüan-ming's Inebriation and Sleep."[1] A description of the former picture explains that "it consists of an ancient willow-tree with a scholar-recluse sitting under it. Before him lies a book and by his side is a pot filled with wine. The man looks a bit tipsy, is smiling, and quietly enjoying himself. This is a representation of T'ao Yüan-ming as he must have looked after he returned to his home. None but Lung-mien, who has enjoyed a life of nature for a period of thirty years, could do such a portrait." The other painting quotes T'ao Yüan-ming's biography as follows: "Be his visitor a man of rank or merely a common fellow, he would entertain him with wine if he had any in the house. Should he be the first to become intoxicated, he would say to the visitor, 'I am drunk and want to sleep. Leave me, now.' So simple and free was he." The latter passage indicates what is one of the greatest virtues in Chinese eyes, contempt for worldly position; but what the two passages both imply, as do an endless number of other stories about T'ao Yüan-ming, is his habitual state of intoxication and Li's condonation of, if not sympathy for, this idiosyncrasy.

XV

Though T'ao Yüan-ming was famous for the fact that he liked, if possible, to become intoxicated every day of his life, he is by no means the only great

[1] Category II, Nos. 22, 63.

man in the annals of Chinese history with whom the love of wine was a conspicuous interest. The catalogue of Li Lung-mien's paintings again and again shows philosophers, princesses, noblemen, or priests in a tipsy condition;[1] the commentators make admiring mention of the "natural" poses, nor did the artist intend to impugn, in these portraits, the dignity of the various men and women who were thus depicted. The literature on the merits and beauty of intoxication is, moreover, so large and varied, the attitude of the Chinese in the matter so different from ours, and of so ancient a growth, that, in order to understand these paintings and the cultural phase of which they are the result, we must make an effort to appreciate the subject from their own point of view.

Drinking has played an important part in the life of the Chinese from prehistoric times down to the present day. The great sage-emperor Yao (2357–2258 B.C.), to whom all virtues are attributed, is said, by tradition, to have consumed daily a thousand cups of wine, while Confucius, who, comparatively, is but a lesser sage, could manage only one hundred cups a day. When discussing the question of wine in his writings, Confucius cautiously states: "In taking wine I will have as much as is good for me," but we know that in the Han dynasty, when Confucianism was in control, drinking was in abeyance. The great Taoists, however, were all confirmed drinkers, and, during the centuries after the fall of the Han dynasty, they established through their lives and their literature an attitude toward drunkenness which influenced China for almost a thousand years to come. The Buddhists made some attempts to check the love of intoxicants among their adherents, but in this as in many other matters they finally accepted the traditions of China.

The very word for "intoxication" in Chinese, "tsui," has a highly poetic

[1] Category II, Nos. 22, 63, 65, 69, 71. Category III, Nos. 61, 62.

connotation, and suggests anything but the sordidness with which we have come to associate it. This indicates on their part an ability always to keep their behavior, when under the influence of intoxicants, on a very high level, and a long association of intemperance with fine and constructive impulses rather than with the general breaking down of necessary inhibitions that intoxication usually causes in occidentals; their objectivity no doubt created for them freer conditions that gave more opportunity for spontaneous expression, and consequently stimulants did not release in them the many ugly repressions with which our unnatural lives have afflicted us.

Whatever the explanation, it must be conceded that no trace of vulgarity mars their history of drinking. The praises of wine are infinite in number and beautiful in spirit. Perhaps Wang Hsi-chih's famous piece of calligraphy written A.D. 353, while on a picnic at the Epidendrum Pavilion,[1] gives one of the happiest pictures of the part that drinking played in their social gatherings. On this occasion a party of wise men, scholars, and other worthies of the time gathered for the celebration of the "Cleansing Ceremony," an old Chou institution which by the fourth century had become a sort of spring festival. They sat on either side of a gently flowing river and, putting little rimmed cups upon the water, allowed them to float down stream. Whenever one of the cups landed, the nearest scholar was permitted to drink its contents. Each participant also had to write a poem; and, in the introduction to his poem, Wang Hsi-chih describes the scene as follows:

"All the wise men have come, young and old, all have assembled. In this locality we have high hills, magnificent ranges, dense forests, and tall bamboos. Around us are clear streams and thundering torrents. While we sit about, passing around the wine-cups on the meandering course of the flowing water, we feel that alternate drinking

[1] Category II, No. 25.

and singing affords us sufficient opportunity to give free play to our pleasant thoughts, even though we lack musical entertainment of any sort, either strings or pipes.

Oh, this day! The sky is brilliant, the air cool and clear, the breeze very gentle. Looking upward, we behold the magnitude of the universe, and looking down, we see the multifarious types and classes of things; wherever we let our attention wander or our thoughts fly, there is nothing but gives the greatest enjoyment to eye and ear. Truly this is the happiest of times."

But the times were not always so happy for these men of the third and fourth centuries, and many of them drank to excess in order that they might forget, as T'ao Yüan-ming unquestionably wished to, the deplorable condition of their country. The note of melancholy, so foreign to the Han dynasty, which at this period enters Chinese literature, is coeval with the increase in drunkenness; and even during the happier T'ang dynasty one always feels in men like the poet Li T'ai-po[1] the relationship of nostalgia to intoxication. These scholars, especially the earlier ones like "The Seven Wise Men of the Bamboo Grove," or T'ao Yüan-ming, who were driven by external circumstances into an extreme Taoism, seem to have arrived at the very end of their tether, where existence was but an illusion and action of any sort was vain; and he who could forget reality in the haze of intoxication was deemed a wise and fortunate person. Such were the early excesses of Taoism when it first lost the steadying power of Confucianist influence and thought. Just as Confucianism needed the critical, liberty-loving side of Taoism to keep it from becoming rigid, so Taoism needed, even more, the sane and unselfish qualities of Confucianism to keep it in touch with the realities of life.

The mood of these extreme Taoists is admirably conveyed in a "Eulogy

[1] Category II, No. 28.

of the Virtues of Wine" written by Liu Ling, another member of "The Seven Wise Men of the Bamboo Grove"; this is worth giving in full because the beauty of its style helped to fix a tradition, as did so many of the other literary productions of this extraordinary group of men.

"Here lives a great man and gentleman who views the universe as no more lasting than a day, and an infinity of time no longer than the flitting moment; who regards the sun and the moon as his door and window, the wilds in the Eight Directions as his court-yard and his streets; who leaves no trace wherever he may walk, and possesses no house to shelter him. He uses the heavens above for his canopy and the earth beneath him for his couch. He goes wherever fancy prompts, and whether he stops or stirs about he has in hand his cup and wine-pot; his whole attention is on wine; he bothers himself about no other thing.

"Then a nobleman's son and a grave soldier, hearing about his ways, began a debate on the pros and cons of his behavior. They became excited; they waxed wroth. An array of the proprieties was marshalled before him; a battery of 'rights' and 'wrongs' assailed him.

"And in the mean time the great gentleman, pot in hand and cup to lip, has been drinking away and lolling among the dregs and residues. Without thought or sorrow, supremely happy, he slowly becomes intoxicated, and suddenly is sober once more. The roar of thunder does not reach him even when he listens attentively; the highest mountain makes no impression even though he stares hard. His body feels neither heat nor cold, nor is his mind disturbed by a wish or an emotion. He looks down upon the life and bustle of the myriad objects all around him; they are to him as weeds floating upon the surface of the water, and the two worthies standing near have as much relationship to him as the worms in the mulberry-trees have to the wasps."

In the seventh century an equally celebrated continuation was written to this panegyric, entitled "A Description of the Land of the Intoxicated," literally of "Drunk-land," by another scholar-recluse named Wang Chi. He was a

brother of the celebrated Wang T'ung,[1] the greatest philosopher of his time, who was revered by his contemporaries as second only to Confucius himself; many of the brilliant men who helped to establish the T'ang dynasty were either Wang T'ung's pupils or his personal friends. Chi, though not without literary ability and a reputation for learning, had not so much as a trace of his brother's exalted traits of character. He was passionately fond of drinking, had no scruples in obtaining official positions in order that he might continue to supply himself with wine, compiled books on wine and its inventors, and even went so far as to build a temple to one of these, Tu K'ang, whom he worshipped as his master. His "Tsui-Hsiang Chi" reads as follows:

"The Land of Drunkenness is no one knows how many thousand li distant from the Middle Empire. It is a vast country, limitless, and devoid of elevations or depressions. Its climate is uniformly temperate; no darkness or dawn; no cold or heat. The customs of the country are in the main quite simple. It has no cities, towns, or villages. The inhabitants are exceedingly refined, free from likes or dislikes, from feelings of joy or anger. They [live] by inhaling the air and drinking the dew, and do not eat cereals. They sleep in the most contented manner; they walk about very leisurely; they mix freely with the birds, animals, fishes, and turtles; the use of boats, carts, and all mechanical appliances is unknown.

"Once Huang-ti [2704–2592 B.C.] made a trip to its capital city. On his return [to his own empire] he was literally distracted, and left this world, in the belief that even the political institution of rope-knotting[2] indicated a state of things very much inferior. The Emperors Yao [2357–2258 B.C.] and Shun [2258–2206 B.C.] made it a rule to be supplied [daily] with one thousand cups and one hundred pots of wine, respectively; and they tried, with the assistance of the immortal being Ku-yi,[3] to go through

[1] Lived *c.* A.D. 549–618.

[2] The introduction of rope-knotting as an aid to human memory in recording transactions was, in the eyes of the Taoists, man's first descent from the condition of absolute trust, simplicity, and inactivity.

[3] Category III, No. 24.

this country, but they probably reached only its frontiers; yet, throughout their reigns, they enjoyed an uninterrupted peace.

"Yü [2205–2198 B.C.] and T'ang [1766–1754 B.C.] first enacted laws and created a multiplicity of ceremonial and music, with the result that, for the period of several dozens of rulers reigning after them in direct succession, the communication with this Land of Drunkenness was cut off. Their officers, Hsi and Ho,[1] hoping to reach this land, threw aside their calendar-making and fled; but they lost their way and died on the road, and consequently the world became unsettled. Then their last great-great-grandsons Chieh [1818–1766 B.C.] and Chou [1154–1122 B.C.], in a passion, ascended the Mound of [liquor] Residues which had a series of ascending steps amounting to thousands of feet and scanned southward; but they did not succeed in catching a single glimpse of this country.

"When King Wu [1134–1116 B.C.] had attained his ambition[2] in the world, he commanded his brother Kung-tan to institute the official rank of Wine-Man, whose duty it was to make and supply the Five Mixtures of wine; and he also aggrandized his dominion by the addition of lands to the extent of seven thousand li, just getting in touch with this country; therefore he was able to lay aside the penal contrivances as useless for forty years. Further down, in the period when the Chou Emperors Li [878–842 B.C.] and Yu [781–771 B.C.], the Ch'ins, and the Hans ruled, the Middle Empire was in a state of chaos, and the intercourse with this country was completely stopped, except that some of their officers and subjects that loved the 'Tao' betook themselves there secretly, once in a while. About a dozen or so of men such as Yüan Ssŭ-tsung,[3] T'ao Yüan-ming, and the like had travelled in this country, and lived out their lives there

[1] The reference to Hsi and Ho is taken from the Shû King (Book of Chronicles, Chap. 4). It is here recorded that in the ninth moon of the year 2159 B.C., an eclipse of the sun took place which Hsi and Ho, as the national astronomers and calendar-makers, should have announced to the people, but they failed to do so because they had both been drinking heavily and neglected their duties.

[2] *i.e.*, had established an empire, in 1122 B.C.

[3] Yüan Chi was a member of "The Seven Wise Men of the Bamboo Grove"; at one time the Emperor Wên-ti tried to marry his son to Yüan's daughter, but Yüan made himself drunk for sixty days in order that the emperor should not find an opportunity of bringing the proposal to his attention.

without returning; and, when they died, they were buried in its earth. The people of the Middle Empire regarded them as Immortals of the Cup.

"Oh! considering the general state of things in this Land of Drunkenness, could it be the identical ancient Kingdom of Hua-hsü-shih?[1] Else, how could its civilization reach such a simple and tranquil stage as this? However, as I now intend to take a trip there myself, I write this description."

This is really a history of China's famous drinkers, and it is significant that all of the strong Confucian periods of rule are designated as "out of touch with Drunk-land."

During the T'ang dynasty the strong central government, the feeling of unity, and the reëstablishment of such Confucian systems as the Academy, the civil service examinations, the university, and so on, gave form to the political structure and inspired men once more with the desire to become responsible parts of the social machinery. Life again became an active, purposeful affair; the scholars were less isolated, the poets less scornful of the attractions of court life, and the emperors themselves were excellent critics, painters, and poets who knew how to treat the delicate temperaments of their gifted subjects. The influence of an untrammelled Taoism was still dominant in some characters, notably in that of Li T'ai-po,[2] who was one of "The Eight Immortals of the Cup," and together with Tu Fu, the greatest of T'ang poets. "The world is but a dream," he wrote. "Why should we then weary our lives with toil? All day long I drink myself into unconsciousness and sleep away helplessly upon my doorstep." Lung-mien has done a picture of him "Upon a Misty River in Wind and Moonlight," because legend says

[1] The Kingdom of Hua-hsü-shih, a name immortalized by the philosopher Lieh-tzŭ, was another one of the Utopias which the Taoists loved to describe. Of this type of literature Wang Chi's essay as well as "The Peach Blossom Fountain" are typical examples.

[2] Lived A.D. 705–762. See Category II, No. 28.

that Li Po was drowned upon such a night when, in a state of intoxication, he reached out from his boat to grasp the moon's reflection in the water. His equally celebrated contemporary, Tu Fu,[1] however, was quite another type of character, that shows the progress of Confucian ideals and points more definitely toward the men who came after him. He, like Li and his friends, was in lifelong government service; and the T'ang historian says: "His writings reveal his constant thoughts of the emperor, and people have ever admired him for his loyalty. Though he lived in a time of trouble, he managed to keep his character unsullied." It was Tu Fu who, in one of his poems, half contemptuously, half playfully, gave to his drink-loving contemporaries the title of "The Eight Immortals of the Cup." He was one of Lung-mien's favorite writers, on whose style of composition Li is supposed to have based his own work. Even more frequently we find in the catalogue a name that has already been mentioned as a model of Confucianism, that of Han Yü,[2] greatest of T'ang essayists, according to Chinese criticism. Here was indeed one of the noblest of the many fine characters of the T'ang dynasty, whom we find praised in the annals of history not only as a literary man but as a courageous statesman who did not hesitate to oppose the emperor himself if the country's welfare demanded it. His critique of Buddhism, written as a memorial to the Emperor Hsien-tsung,[3] has ever been considered one of the finest of Chinese state papers, and his commentaries upon the Confucian classics became the basis of a new school of criticism that was not superseded until the time of the philospher Chu Hsi.[4]

[1] Lived A.D. 712–770. See page 49.

[2] Lived A.D. 768–824. See pages 72, 73. Also Category II, No. 52. Category III, No. 65.

[3] Category III, No. 65.

[4] Lived A.D. 1130–1200.

XVI

Such was the development that paved the way and made possible the remarkably talented and many-sided group of men by whom Lung-mien was surrounded and of whom, together with the no less remarkable Su Tung-p'o, he was the chief ornament. Through the influence of Confucian standards, life had broadened and become more poised since the Taoist days of the harassed and oppressed Chin dynasty. The Sung Confucianists had acquired too many varied and vital interests to wish to drink away their lives. We still find Li Lung-mien doing a portrait of the dignified Su Tung-p'o "when he is tipsy";[1] but no mention is made, either in the biographies of Li Lung-mien or of his contemporaries, of any tendencies toward drunkenness. They enjoyed their wine, as they picnicked "on some rock beside flowing water"; but the lives of these men were too active both politically and artistically, their characters too stalwart, to permit of much time or inclination for excessive indulgence in wine. Yet they loved the glorious old topers of antiquity, loved their independence, their ability as writers, and the spirit of powerful individualism which they had left as a vitalizing spark to their more staid and sober descendants. In the Sung dynasty men had learned to live in the market-place and yet maintain the integrity of their high motives; but if Su Tung-p'o, Su Chê, Huang Shan-ku, and Li Lung-mien were able to give to the world such varied and glorious talents, it was because the ideals of T'ao Yüan-ming and his predecessors, "The Seven Wise Men of the Bamboo Grove," were still real to them; it was because they were intelligent enough to see in their responsible, hard-drinking, lovable Wang Chi a gift and a vision that supplemented admirably the stern morality of his Confucian brother Wang T'ung. Their austere conception of life, their passion for service, was

[1] Category II, No. 65.

emotionalized, softened, broadened, and made deeply human by the thought that their interests, like those of their Taoist ancestors, must develop freely, if each was to bring to his countrymen his fullest possibilities. But they had also learned that individualism and inaction can be driven so far that they lead to destruction; and this knowledge, which brought them back once more into a well-balanced, socialized, productive, and happy frame of mind, they owed to the resurgence of Confucianism.

Thus the great pieces of literature which influenced the men of T'ang and Sung, the great political movements, the philosophies most immediately linked with their behavior, were always those of Laotzŭ and Confucius. These were so intermingled that, even in a Taoism as fervent as that of T'ao Yüan-ming, there was a strong Confucian bent which shows itself in the multitude of classic quotations in his text, while in a staunch Confucian like Han Yü, we find irresistible Taoist leanings, as for example, in the essay that accompanies Li's illustrations for "Coupling Lines on a Stone Tripod."[1] No scholar's mentality was absolutely free from either mode of thought, and it must ever be borne in mind that the use of the terms Taoist and Confucian never denotes more than a preponderating tendency.

In such a development, what was the rôle of Buddhism? Let us consider, to make this clear, another of the T'ang poets and painters whom Lung-mien ardently admired, whose work he often copied, whose style obviously influenced his own, the ineffable Wang Wei,[2] who helped to make unforgettable that most brilliant and beautiful of periods, the reign of the T'ang Emperor Ming-huang. He was a government official until carried off, together with the emperor and his court, by the victorious Tartar chieftain, An Lu-shan, in 755; and when, two years later, order had been restored, Wang Wei returned

[1] Category II, No. 52. [2] Lived A.D. 688–759.

to his beloved homestead in the Sung Hills, where he finished his days in the enjoyment of the superb scenery. He was a devout Buddhist and "lived in strict conformity with its practices, eating no meat and avoiding clothing of brilliantly colored materials." Yet there is no trace of his Buddhism in the picture that we get of him through the eyes of Li Lung-mien. His Buddhism did not, in the unconscious sifting of his pupil's mind, come through. He was known in his day as a painter of Buddhist subjects, but it is only as a lover and interpreter of landscape that he figures in the catalogue.[1] The importance of his Buddhism is, in the spontaneous selection of his disciple, completely obliterated by his Taoist love of cloud forms, his affection for the Sung Hills, and for the mountain cottage of which he made so beautiful a painting that Li Lung-mien was only one of many later artists who attempted to copy it. And surely, after tracing the intimacy not only of Taoism but of every phase of Chinese life with nature, it is no longer necessary to refute the ludicrous idea that Buddhism brought the love of landscape to China. In this respect Wang Wei was no different from his ultra Confucian or Taoist contemporaries, no different from his spiritual ancestors, T'ao Yüan-ming, or Wang Hsi-chih and his associates, Hsü Hsün[2] and Hsieh An,[2] from "The Seven Wise Men of the Bamboo Grove," or even the more ancient, more Confucian "Old Men of the Shang Mountains."[3]

With the exception of superficial references to pagodas or monasteries and an occasional line in which he states that "in middle age he loved the Buddhist teachings," we see in Wang Wei's poetry and prose the same elimination of Buddhist philosophy that characterizes his pictorial art. Do we find

[1] Category II, Nos. 16, 17, 18. Category V, No. 12.

[2] Category II, No. 50.

[3] Category II, Nos. 49, 57.

ecstatic hymns to Kuan-yin or Buddha? Not at all. Instead we hear him singing as any Taoist would:[1]

> "Whene'er I wish to roam in solitude
> With joys that I alone can know,
> I wander till I reach the water's edge,
> And sinking down, I contemplate the cloud forms."

His well-known essay on "The Secrets of Landscape Painting," in which, as an ardent Buddhist, he would no doubt have been only too glad to acknowledge any contributions which his religious faith had made to his art, there is no single line that would indicate even the existence of such a religion. On the contrary, it harks back to the ancient Chinese rules of technique that dominated this good Buddhist, as they did all those who preceded or came after him.

What is the reason for this nullification as an outward influence of a creed that in the T'ang dynasty had followers even among the *literati?* It is due to the powerful literary and philosophical tradition of which we have just traced the reflection in the catalogue of Lung-mien, which from earliest childhood held every Chinese student firmly in its grasp. The painters were primarily scholars, and Wang Wei, like his fellow-artists, had spent his whole youth acquiring his mode of thought and his style from Confucius, Mencius, Chuang-tzŭ, and the Chin Taoists, especially T'ao Yüan-ming; his behavior had been moulded by Confucian regulations, his official duties bound him closely to a Confucian government. His intellectual development was dominated by precisely the same ancient factors as was that of his non-Buddhistic contemporaries, Li T'ai-po, Tu Fu, and Han Yü; and to the traditional content of their thinking was added an equally powerful technical tradition, whether that tech-

[1] Category II, No. 17.

nique be one of poetizing, painting, or any other form of expression. Not until the Sung dynasty was any Chinese literature written in the style of the Buddhist texts; and when we realize how closely the arts and letters were bound up with daily life, how firmly evolutional the whole process was, this unassailable, impermeable quality of the Chinese cultural traditions is easily understood.

The interaction of these traditions in Chinese pictorial art may be with accuracy compared to the structure of a piece of woven material. Confucianism is the woof which acts as basis and framework of the whole. Without the strong organization of the Confucian state and its creation of comparatively peaceful conditions that made production possible; without the deliberate encouragement of art carried on by the emperors, or the careful preservation of art products both ancient and modern in imperial galleries and academies; above all things, without the Confucian insistence upon continuity of subjects and techniques, Chinese art could scarcely have existed at all, would certainly never have developed so broadly or so magnificently, and would inevitably have perished in the numerous destructive conflicts, or by the natural deterioration of time and accident. Through this Confucian woof runs in and out the warp of Taoism, lending an endless variety of pattern and color, a richness of imagination, of gayety and humor, in short, much of what is fascinating, alluring, charming in this most beautiful of cultural fabrics. Through their constant reiteration of nature's importance, through their frequent reinspiration by unbroken contact with the peace and splendor of nature's domain, through their preservation of the scholar's ancient independence of thought, they kept their art a living one, expressive of themselves, developing as they developed, glorious and free as long as they were, becoming a mechanical reiteration only when the flaming inspiration of their Taoist fathers had been

quenched. Then the pattern-giving warp wore thin and the bare woof stood out lifeless and unadorned.

In the most beautiful moments of this tapestry were noticeable some strands of precisely the same weave but of different hue that lent a note of interesting novelty, exotic in quality and attractive through that very strangeness; that was the influence of Buddhism. These strands contributed delightfully to the variety of the fabric. Were they removed, a considerable gap would make itself felt; but to the fundamental structure they added no necessary element, and the pattern even without them would have been of transcendent beauty.

This fusing of all the cultures is what singularly characterizes the Sung dynasty. The more naïve T'ang dynasty still had excluding faiths, and could at times be passionately roused to the defence or attack, with arms or with equally wounding memorials, of one or the other form of belief. The Sung dynasty was less ardent and more generous, less emotional but more intelligent. It sought to reconcile every mode of human thought, even those that had, not so long ago, seemed complete contradictions. It was one of those pinnacles of human culture when men gather within themselves all the products of the past as so many different expressions of a single beautifully varied mentality.

It is precisely this rich pragmatic eclecticism that could never have been evolved without Confucianism as its basis. Because of its firmly poised objectivity, Confucianism made such breadth of mind and imagination possible, a fact that will be all the more readily conceded, if we contrast with this attitude the passionate exclusiveness of such a religion as Buddhism. Confucianism may indeed be criticized as too prone to become eclectic, but the final judgment of this proclivity can rest only upon the character of the things that it achieved. The art of Li Lung-mien, embracing as it does the complete ex-

pression of this tendency, may therefore be considered a fair test of the worth of that whole eclectic movement which in the Sung dynasty marked the native recovery from the Buddhist invasion.

In Li Lung-mien we have that highest form of impersonal greatness which gathers within itself all the developmental forces of the past and, by its objective losing of self in them, gives to the world a new-found, greater self that becomes in its all-embracing nature one of the culminating points of the evolutional process. Beyond it, moreover, progress for the time being cannot go; and when such natures pass away, their work is shattered and carried on by a multitude of lesser beings whose entire contribution cannot equal that temporary summing up of all that was true and strong and beautiful in the past.

XVII

After the year 1090 we find very few dated paintings in the catalogue; and, though the biographies intimate that Li Lung-mien was not affected with rheumatism until he retired in 1100, I suspect that during these last ten years of his official life his productivity was much hampered by the disease of which he died. Mi Fei tells us that at one time Li Lung-mien was unable for three years to lift his brush. He dates this time merely by stating that it was then that he himself began to paint, and as Mi Fei surely painted before 1100 (he died in 1107), poor Li had probably been plagued earlier in life by his rheumatic afflictions.

At no time during his official career did he fill positions of great importance. At first he was assistant secretary in the district of Nan-k'ang[1] and in that of Ch'ang-yüan,[2] then chief secretary in the sub-prefecture of Ssŭ-chow, Anhui.

[1] Nan-an, Kiangsi. [2] Ta-ming, Chihli.

As he had a reputation by that time as a scholar, Lu T'ien recommended him for the position of Literary Secretary in one of the departments of the cabinet. Subsequently he became Inspector of the Censorate and was given the title of Ch'ao-Fêng-Lang, a purely honorary position of the Second Class, Sixth Grade. As these later appointments are of a formal character, carrying with them no heavy responsibilities, they were probably given to Lung-mien as tributes to his learning and artistic genius, a not uncommon way in the T'ang and Sung dynasties of providing scholars with a dignified competency that would leave the recipient free to pursue his studies or his art.

The Topographical Gazetteer[1] informs us that Li Kung-lin's Reading Hall in the Lung-mien Hills was situated near the village "Spring and Autumn," eighty li south of Shu-ch'êng city, and that next to this studio was a pond called the "Inkstone-Washing Pond" because Kung-lin had the habit of cleaning his inkstone there. "The water is black even to-day," we are assured. His tomb, which is mentioned in the same source, was five li south of Shu-ch'êng.

After his retirement "he gave himself up to the pursuit of happiness among the Lung-mien Hills"; but the Pi-shu Lu-hua[2] gives an account of his last years which contains a note of sadness, indicating that appreciation came to Lung-mien, as to many another great man, when it was too late for him to enjoy it. "In later life he painted successive scenes from the eighty chapters of the Hua-Yên Sutra. Li Ch'ung-yüan [his cousin] wrote the text, the work being of very high excellence in every way. He did not have time to finish it, for the rheumatism in his limbs made it impossible to continue. He often sighed deeply over this. When he could paint no more, he had to pay generously in gold and silk to get his own paintings from other people's collec-

[1] Bk. XLV, p. 7. [2] Chap. 3, p. 28.

tions in order to store them up himself. This shows how highly he valued them. In the period of Hsüan-ho[1] his paintings were considered equal in rank to those of Wu Tao-tzŭ. There were many who sought to obtain high office with one or two of his sheets of painting. Before he was affected by his illness, there were only a few famous scholars who appreciated him, and all he got for his work at that time was a dozen sheets of good poetry."

However, in an essay that he himself wrote and illustrated, Li Lung-mien has left us a picture of his old age which robs those last rheumatic years of all their pain. It has, to be sure, no more the life-loving, convivial, humorous quality which we associate with the happy, early days spent at the capital in the company of Su Shih and Huang Shan-ku, but it reveals the enduring quality of the pleasures that scholarship and a love of nature can give. "Moral Lessons at the Farmstead in the Lung-mien Hills,"[2] it is called, for he painted it to point out to his children or grandchildren the way of true virtue. One inscription asserts that the seven children whom he mentions were his six sons and his only daughter, Mae; but some of his contemporaries repeatedly declare that he had but one child, a son named Shê, and others speak authoritatively of a son-in-law. Later critics assert that, though the portrait of the old man is certainly that of Li himself, the picture is merely an allegory which contributes nothing to our knowledge of his personal relationships.

In the first section of the essay Li portrays himself in a state of melancholia, and then describes how the children, one after another, attempt to divert him. The first, named Yi, offers him some wine, saying that "the pure wine of I-chêng[3] is famed far and wide for its excellence; its color is like the dew; its taste like honey-water; held in a pot of gold and drunk out of a cup

[1] A.D. 1119–1125. [2] Category II, No. 48. [3] Hupeh.

of white jade, it passes between the lips, diffusing its pungency and fragrance." The old man fears its consequences and impatiently waves it away.

In the second section a young girl, Mae, comes forward with a salver, saying: "This beautiful peony is from the banks of the River Lo. It secretes its beauty in the spring, and blooms as summer sets in. So exquisitely pink and white is it that the light on the clouds at sunset is outdone in beauty. At dawn, when the dew still glittered, I plucked the flower with my slender fingers and placed it in this golden salver; it is so brilliant in color and so sweet that the peach and plum flowers are put out of conceit with their beauty, and even the water-lilies feel their hearts fail within them and begin to fade. This is surely one of the most beautiful things in the world. Is it enough to make you break into a smile?" The old man replies that "the entanglements in which beauty involves us are too knotty ever to be undone."

Then Ching, the second boy, offers Li some wonderful fish to eat that had been brought by a stranger from a river in the west. "They are so delicate and tender that they can be cut into strips as fine as silken threads, and when prepared with sweet orange juice and best vinegar, will render all other delicacies superfluous." Rich cookery, however, is summarily dismissed as poison for the constitution.

Fang, tea-cup in hand, now comes forward, saying that tea-drinking purifies the thoughts: "In this world there are some leaves of heaven's gift which grow in the Min province.[1] They are boxed as a tribute to the emperor and are more precious than the 'Upper Spring' wine. When they first reach the emperor, he makes a beverage of them and then he has them distributed among the Six Palaces. The packages that remain he bestows upon his ministers and subjects. Among the different specimens are the 'Flying Dragon'

[1] Fukien.

and the 'Mi-yün Treasure.' Though the cakes in which the leaves are done up are not bigger than an inch, each one would fetch a hundred ounces of silver. For brewing, the cake is crushed with a golden hammer and ground in a jade mortar with a jade pestle; then the powder is put into a cup from Chien-an[1] and boiled with spring water from the hills of Hui. If Liu Ling could taste this beverage he would cancel his 'Ode to the Virtue of Wine,' and should the Emperor Wu-ti of Han sip it, he would cast away his 'Receptacle for the Dew.'" In spite of this tempting description, tea is dismissed as trivial.

In the fifth section Ch'i praises chess as a diversion. He declares: "The strategy and tactics used in this game are not surpassed by those of the great commanders Yi and Lü, and the prowess with which attacks are warded off or battles fought would put to shame the greatest ancient warriors Pên and Yü. When the struggle is at its height, the contestants become so excited and absorbed that a violent storm with a landslide would be noiseless to them, and even a hurricane beating up the seas would not reach their ears." The old man only replies: "When I was young, I played such games, but in my advanced age, I will have no more of it."

Liang, the next boy, has no greater success when he suggests the excitement of dice-playing. The old man complains of fatigue.

Then the youngest boy, Yü, turns to the other children and says that their father can be cheered only by a talk on poetical topics or by the happiness of quiet. He addresses them, giving, of course, Li Lung-mien's own ideas of real happiness and a beautiful picture of his home and his mode of life:

"To the south there are bamboos which our father has planted; under the bamboo is the cottage in which he has lived; the cottage contains a collection of books that he has made; moreover, it is provided with bright windows and immaculate desks where

[1] Kiangsi.

he has been standing or sitting morning and night. The principles of the Six Classics have intoxicated him sufficiently without the need of the product of yeast which only dulls the head; the flowers of thought from different philosophers are beautiful enough to gladden his eyes without the demoralizing effect of the beauty of plants; their virtuous precepts have stilled his hunger without the unpleasant odors which food gives out; to drink in their words and passages was more than enough to purify his thoughts without leaving the bitter taste of tea; then exploring the history of the 'Spring and Autumn' period [745–404 B.C.], scanning the 'Contending States' period [403–222 B.C.], studying and discussing the period of Ch'in [221–207 B.C.] and Han [A.D. 202–220] down to the times of Sui [A.D. 581–618] and T'ang [A.D. 618–907], he has discovered all the causes of peace and confusion, and the explanations for the rise and fall of dynasties. Which is more profitable, this or a game of chess? By amassing ten thousand volumes in his mind and by collecting thousands of years beneath his eyes, he has found that such knowledge is the door through which all great men must pass. Which is more enriching, this or a game of dice?"

Thus does Li Lung-mien himself describe for us the deeply Confucian side of his character. Even beauty, to which his whole life would seem to have been devoted, is rejected, according to the classic Chinese maxim that the too great love of beauty leads to loss of ambition. With an austerity that is worthy of the ancient sages, he rejects all bodily indulgences, and only the thought of his books and the review of China's mighty past can brighten the old man's features. "Finding his trouble dispelled," the essay concludes, "he gladly follows Yü's suggestion that they shall go for a walk." The final picture shows the old man sauntering through a bamboo grove with all his children grouped about him in true patriarchal fashion.

As a last glimpse of Li Lung-mien, it is a very happy one.

THE ART OF LI LUNG-MIEN

I

THE history of pictorial art in China is a reflection of the history of its philosophic systems; and having determined, to some extent, from a perusal of his subjects, the nature and scope of Li Lung-mien's interests, it is first necessary to distinguish the various types of plastic production that each of these different influences would imply. If we realize clearly how the aesthetics of the Chinese grew naturally out of their thinking, and what form of expression their various modes of thinking took, it can more readily be decided to what extent Li Lung-mien was dominated by that past which he so venerated, and to what extent he fashioned his heritage to suit the peculiar needs of his own era and his own individuality.

A people who loved the world as did the Chinese, whose whole living and thinking were conditioned by their understanding of natural phenomena, were bound to go in search of the meaning of form and become great artists. Since the Confucianists had expended their comprehension of the universe upon the organization of an analogous social structure, they felt its rhythm through this human medium and became figure painters, whereas the Taoists remained faithful to the source of their inspiration, and devoted themselves to the depiction of nature itself.

The firm and majestic quality of the Confucian figure paintings is due to their fine comprehension of the solemnity and the profound necessity of beautifully organized human relationships. They felt with a piercing poignancy the pathetic dependence, the stranded note, of the individual as such; and both their technique and composition were the outcome of a determination, first to see the individual as nobly as they could by endowing him with the accoutrements of his social status, then to raise him to his real importance and worth

by emphasizing his function in the life of the group. If the early Chinese figure paintings show us humanity in its most cultured, its most distinguished aspect, it is because these things were made by a people whose conception of man's rôle in the universe has never been equalled either in its simplicity or its assurance; it had a dignity that was devoid of arrogance, humility that never became servile, and that beautiful calm which is possible only for those who are untroubled by the thought of destiny. Noble the race that achieved such distinction for existence, infinitely noble the art that helps us to sense, even to-day, how proudly the structure of their life was treasured and recorded. The exquisite disciplinary fixedness of their going and coming can there still be measured in the equally controlled adjustments of form and space; for the orderly arrangement of their compositions is the direct outcome of the orderly arrangement of their daily lives. The even tenor of their way was translated into the no less even tenor of their line.

Necessarily there was conveyed by pictures of so racial an origin, no hint of individual fancy. If they contained the sublime beauty and dignity which these carefully rehearsed movements would eventually acquire, they also had a uniformity that the dictated routine of such an existence would make it impossible to escape. The very subject-matter was bound to be, not that of individual interest, but that of general concern: the glory of the emperor, the appurtenances of court life, celebrated moments of history, the portraits of loyal and distinguished citizens, ceremonious behavior alike of great and small toward one another, anything, indeed, that would enhance and serve the institutions of the state and the exemplary deeds of its members.

In addition, the writings of the sages were ever a powerful stimulus. The didactic and ethical note, singularly the characteristic of those who aim chiefly at benevolence and wisdom, was present from the earliest moment; but at

no period in the long development does the Confucian artist show evidences of leaden-handed intention. He was always too intrinsically the seeker of beauty to abuse in this way the function of the artist. But he was so conditioned, and generations before him had been so conditioned, that his seeking for tangible loveliness was guided by what had ever seemed to him most sacred, the love for ancient wisdom and the inculcation of that wisdom in his posterity. Without the slightest prostitution of his plasticity, he could be ethical, he could illustrate the moral Confucian texts, because these were not abstract thoughts or the mere addenda of existence, but the essence of his action, and the very terms upon which he held life to be dear.

II

In order to appreciate the first bent of the Confucian aesthetic sense and how inextricably it was entwined with the organization and conduct of the state, let us turn to a section of the essay on "The Development of Chinese Fine Art" by Liu Shih-p'ei[1] in the Kuo-ts'ui Hsüeh-pao for 1907.

"With the rise of the Chous [1122 B.C.] simplicity gave way to ornamentation, and the fine arts were cultivated not alone to serve a useful purpose. And what then were the fine arts? They included etiquette and all the rules of ceremony. Tzŭ-t'ai-shu, an officer of the state of Chêng, once made this remark: 'Ceremony is the mainstay of heaven and earth, emitting its brilliance in the Five Colors and finding its expression in the Five Tones. To support the Five Colors there have come into existence the 'Nine

[1] Liu Shih-p'ei is one of a group of well-known scholars who, though eminent for their accomplishment in the native field of learning, are attempting to recast the study of Chinese history and fine arts more or less along the scientific lines which now prevail in occidental research. The Kuo-ts'ui Hsüeh-pao, or "Journal of the Essence of National History and Literature," was founded by this group of modern-minded scholars to publish the studies of China's cultural development which they made in this modern spirit.

Ornaments,' the 'Six Hues,' and the 'Five Combined Colors.' To support the Five Tones there have come into existence the 'Nine Songs,' the 'Eight Winds,' the 'Seven Tunes,' and the 'Six Upper Chords.' This shows that in the Chou period anything that was helpful in bringing out the beautiful went under the name of ceremony. Consequently the fine arts were held in the highest estimation and were used, on the one hand to give warnings or to show a good example, and on the other to ordain rank or order of precedence. To achieve the former object, the arts were concerned with the study and use of solid facts, differing entirely from such as are achieved as a flight of fancy; therefore all such works were based upon old traditions, the introduction of new ideas being strictly discountenanced.

"For what was understood to be beautiful could be expressed only by means of the true and the good. That which demonstrated an [historical] fact was considered true; that which conformed to a sanctioned standard was considered good. During the Chou dynasty there were engraved on bronze and carved on stone only proclamations of merit and records of distinguished achievements for the information of sons and grandsons; all the dances and the music were descriptive representations of glorious virtues; all the inscriptions recorded facts only, and the music invariably expressed achievements [civil or military]. Even the maps and pictures, when used, were reproductions of the exact forms of things, to which names could readily be assigned, or perhaps a picture was made to depict an historical fact, in which case the man who examined it would be benefited by the moral lesson it was meant to teach. Thus was beauty achieved through the demonstration of fact.

"The bells, tripods, and so on, were cast by metal workers; the jade tablets and other pieces were made by lathe-turners; and there were things of a lower order, such as tablets of credence, the tooth-edged boards and upright posts [of the stands for bells and sonorous stones], and the like, which were made to show the high or low rank of the possessors by the characters or designs carved upon them. Also the costumes, the embroideries, the colors in which the materials were dyed, and the designs painted on the materials, all these were in charge of officers specially appointed for these purposes,

the object being to standardize the embroideries for different uses, to regulate the styles, to fix the lineal measures, to see that the colors used—black, yellow, blue, and red—were all pure and good. These are instances in which the beautiful was secured through conformity to sanctioned standards.

"The root of the question, as we have traced it, lies in this, that in the remote past, the fine arts served to emphasize dignity and rank, and were the direct outcome of an elaborate ceremonial. . . . Thus whatever ancient fine arts may have existed in connection with etiquette, ornamentation, and other elaborate institutions, were preserved with the ancient ceremonies. This we owe to the Confucians."

III

It is obviously one of the important influences of this remote antiquity that China achieved such a love of fine workmanship, and of that characteristic in life and in material objects which we can only define as quality, both of which were such important factors in the creation of all her later arts. There was no class of artists in the Chou or earlier periods, in our sense of the word; but all the many appurtenances for which the deep feeling of the Chinese for office and rank created a need,—the robes of state, the jades that designated authority, the bronzes which served as emblems of imperial and sacred dignity,—these beautiful products of their ceremonial rites were all wrought by specially trained artisans, whose work was carefully superintended, as we have just seen, by specially appointed officials. The materials and colors had to be of a degree of fineness that corresponded to the high station of the personage for whom they were intended, and in this way an ideal of workmanship and of sheer quality was born that China never permitted herself to forget. In the Han dynasty, when the civil service examinations gave great impetus to the isolation of the scholar class, the artist also developed, as distinct from the artisan; but

even when the cruder manual labor was contemned by the scholar and artist, the love of an exquisite technique persisted, and the need for quality in craftsmanship and in materials was satisfied by the development of a superb handling of the calligraphist's and painter's brush, and the insistence upon perfection in the silks, papers, and inks by means of which their new-found skill was expressed.

The preservation of these ancient achievements, with all that they implied, was not an easy task for the Confucian philosophers. The whole complicated system of ceremonial which the Chou dynasty had built up, and the ornamental style of living and of art in which it resulted, were looked upon as decadent when the reaction against the weakened central government took place. Had it not been for the persistent struggle of the Confucians, the whole structure with its magnificent incentive to artistic expression would have been overthrown, and the classic Han dynasty, the foundation of the later Chinese social and artistic structure, could never have occurred. The same author thus describes the characteristics of Han art:

"From the period of Anterior Ch'in (255–206 B.C.) and Han, scholars gave up industries and manufacturing as unworthy of their energies, and for music and painting there arose a class of specialists. The secrets of their arts are now lost to us, the only one that still gives us an opportunity for study being that of epigraphy. Take the seals and stone tablets of the Han period, for instance. All the pictures found [on the latter] do not go beyond the two classifications, historical and descriptive, and all the characters engraved [on both] are regular in form, never deviating in the slightest degree from the established rules. This gives us an idea of the nature of art as cultivated by the Hans. Generally speaking, it has a uniformly dignified style; it shows at the same time a spirit of antiqueness and primitiveness that is quite lovable. It comes very near to the fact-demonstrating principle of Chou and was quite different from the love of the unique that characterizes the men of later ages."

This spirit of traditionalism and the fact-demonstrating principle, as the Chinese author calls it, which adequately covers all subjects of the Han stones, also describes the early pictorial efforts when the artist-class began definitely to separate itself from that of the artisans.

IV

As examples of the glorious possibilities, as well as the limitations, that so strong a classicism involves, we need only study the two earliest Confucian paintings which the occidental world possesses, both attributed to Ku K'ai-chih.[1] One of these, in the British Museum,[2] illustrates a Confucian text, entitled "The Admonitions of the Imperial Preceptress";[3] the other, in the collection made by Mr. Freer for the Smithsonian Institution, entitled "The Goddess of the River Lo,"[4] is really a series of illustrations for Ch'ü Yüan's[4] poems on the ancient spirit worship of the state of Ch'u. Both pictures, like all purely Confucian art expressions, are figure paintings; both are "fact-demonstrating," and the subjects as well as their techniques are hereditary. The relationship in treatment of line and mass to Han art, both in the figures and in the crude attempts at landscape, is palpable; nor do the paintings, in spite of the greater flexibility of their materials, show a much more individual character than do the earlier and simpler compositions on stone. Convention dominates every stroke of the brush as it had formerly dictated those of the chisel.

[1] Late fourth century painter.

[2] See Binyon's pamphlet on the Ku K'ai-chih of the British Museum, with whose analysis I differ radically. In reply I can only say that Binyon speaks of the Taoist emotions in this painting without defining these "emotions" in any way or pointing out their specific effect upon Ku K'ai-chih's art. Both Mr. Freer's painting and that of the British Museum are now considered copies, but that does not alter their value as types.

[3] Category II, No. 31. [4] See text, page 89. Also Category II, Nos. 7, 32.

Had Ku K'ai-chih's name not accidentally come down to us attached to these paintings, we could nevertheless have dated these works as purely Confucian products, or faithful copies, of the pre-T'ang period, and except from an historical point of view, the question of their authorship would not have aroused any more interest than do the equally impersonal products of Han. In both cases the subject and the aesthetic expression are not personal conceptions, but racial emotions conveyed in cadences that were the product of a communal heritage, still reinforced by the experiences of a communal life. It is precisely this impersonal element, this racial quality, by which all Chinese painters, no matter how great, are dominated, these inherited factors whether of subject or technique, the feeling of an artistic rhythm which corresponded to the rhythm of their social and political existence, that can be isolated as the plastic contributions of Confucianism to their art.

To particularize somewhat more the character of the Confucian element in Chinese art, and to show how at all periods it survived, I cannot do better than to recount an enlightening experience that happened to me while I was comparing, in Mr. Freer's galleries, the famous "Tribute Horses" of Han Kan with the painting of a hunt supposed to be the work of a contemporary Tartar named Hu Ch'ien.[1] At first sight the latter painting appealed to me much more. It had an atmosphere which I defined vaguely as "singularly modern"; but further study revealed why the undisciplined Tartar should seem nearer to our unschooled sense of symmetry than the carefully nurtured classicism of an artist like Han Kan, whose love of horse painting placed him wholly within a Han tradition. The Tartar painter had evidently studied the Chinese artists, for his excellent technique was based upon that of the T'ang period and his sense of form was splendidly developed; but the manner in which he composed his form

[1] Both paintings are now in the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution.

was so chaotic, and the distribution of color so arbitrary, that in comparison with the balance of Han Kan and the majesty of his well-measured rhythm, the Tartar painting was as untutored as would be the painting of a child next to a Cezanne still-life. The Tartar reflected as perfectly his lack of tradition and of an harmoniously regulated existence, as Han Kan reflected his carefully organized environment and his inherited sense of orderly progression.

That this contrast was not one of outward ornament, a difference merely of subject, is brought out by the fortunate accident that Han Kan's "Tribute Horses" are arrayed in Tartar trappings and accompanied by Tartar chieftains. The foreign atmosphere is just as strong in the Chinese picture as in the Tartar hunt: but in the former all the material is sternly subdued to the Confucian sense of organization, whereas Hu Ch'ien lacks this synthetic gift, and substitutes for the impersonal classicism of Han Kan, a familiar folk-tale quality, achieved through a mixture of *naïveté* and of brutal, uncontrolled energy.

Thus we find the same serene and noble assurance of line continuing to express itself long after other influences had broadened the interests of the Chinese artists. The Confucian ideals were, in fact, continuously and purely maintained until the time of Li Lung-mien and much later. After Ku K'ai-chih, such men as Lu T'an-wei (sixth century), Yen Li-pên (seventh century), Chang Hsüan (eighth century), and Chou Fang (early ninth century), to enumerate a few, carried on the ideals of Confucian figure painting, with obvious relationship to one another's work and with an astonishing absence of Taoistic or foreign influences. The same continuity which Confucianism had achieved for the social structure, it created, through the institution of copying, both of subjects and of techniques, for the art history of China. This copying was never servile, but consisted of such profound re-creation that most of these paintings have more originality, more life, than occidental pictures for

which no immediate precedent can be found. Its importance to the development of all phases of Chinese art was immeasurable; and this insistence upon continuity, this mechanism for the communization or racializing of all individual vision, was if anything a greater contribution on the part of the Confucian mentality than its early achievement of an independent and strongly founded plastic expression; for the very survival of their own aesthetic beginnings, as well as those of later inspirations, depended upon this never ending passion for preservation.

V

Nor did their attitude toward tradition contain that fetishistic element that makes for the stultification of uncivilized races. They kept their classicism active, for they comprehended the limitations as well as the utility of the preservative instinct, and hastened to assimilate all new ways of thinking, as long as these continued to develop.

It may be objected to this analysis that all forms of progress must show continuity, that in Chinese art as in all arts continuity is an only too unavoidable phase of natural development, and therefore not the exclusive product of Confucian thinking. It is true that, even in the comparative disorganization of occidental life, the great geniuses, whether in literature or in painting, in spite of temporary disruptive effects, always prove themselves clearly to have maintained a close continuity. But in our civilization this was natural and unguided growth, whereas the Chinese continuity was a deliberately and carefully planned intensive culture — culture, be it noted, as opposed to mere growing — and our own results, as compared with theirs, are as much at variance as a primeval jungle and an Italian garden.

The care with which each tree that ventured to grow in this well-ordered garden was shaped to its own best advantage and to the glory of the whole—this is essentially the history of Chinese pictorial art. Confucianism not only invented its own beautiful designs, but it shaped the entire garden; and just as there was danger that the plan was becoming a little monotonous and stiff, new life sprang up, and was guided from its first germination by this feeling for an orderly development which their classic culture had established. Before we can understand the functioning of this Confucian process of assimilation, it is first necessary to appreciate the nature of the new additions, and how they presented themselves to the already highly developed Chinese sense of form.

VI

OLD as are the Confucian leanings of the Chinese mind, Taoism had ever lived close beside them, ready to emerge whenever circumstances favored it. The Empire of Han was too firmly built to leave much opportunity for individual expression; but during the hostilities, both military and political, of the Six Dynasties, the socialization of individual energies was difficult if not impossible, and they found their outlet less in service to the state and more in personal pursuits of the arts and letters. All the ardor which Confucianism had been free to expend on the upbuilding of a great commonwealth was suddenly repressed and literally forced to seek other channels of outlet. As a result of this escape from group existence, originality rather than conformity became the paramount ideal of behavior, and Taoism, dominant as all romantic periods have been, through a temporary weakness in the classical continuity, began immediately to reflect its triumph in artistic fecundity.

Let us turn again to the statements on this occurrence of the same essayist

who characterized the Chou and Han periods for us. Speaking of the scholars of Wei and Chin he says:

"Neglecting convention, they would not suffer themselves to be bound down by ceremony, and when they devoted their attention to any art or craft, they did it according to their own dictates, regarding art as a thing for their own amusement. Then scholars prided themselves upon their freedom; . . . hence they had an understanding of things distinct from those they had actually seen or heard. In poetry, for instance, they aimed at creating a sense of style and in painting they admired spiritual beauty. Even in such matters as playing an air, discussing the tone of a word, tuning the scholar's harp, or playing a flageolet, they would cudgel their brains to hit upon a manner that should be out of the common. Even in playing chess, they invented a style that was very poetic and far from the common (or traditional) forms, giving in this way free play to their pleasant flights of fancy. This was really the most glorious period for the progress of the fine arts.

"Summing up, we find that the Han people esteemed all that was dignified and imposing, the Chin people all that was free and poetic; the Hans held conformity to standards as an ideal, whereas the Chins valued the free and natural spirit; thus the people of Han forbore from seeking the unprecedented; the people of Chin, on the other hand, cherished their inspirations."

VII

THE list of painters given by Chang Yen-yüan in his Li-tai Ming-hua-chi contains but six names for the two hundred years of the Posterior Han period (A.D. 25–221), but for the Chin period (A.D. 265–420) the number leaps to twenty-three, and for the third, fourth, and fifth centuries he cites as many as eighty-seven names.[1] Of these early works, the two scrolls attributed to

[1] *Native Sources for the History of Chinese Pictorial Art*, by Hirth. Eng. ed. of A. E. Meyer, p. 3.

Ku K'ai-chih, which have just been discussed, still show a predominant interest in figure painting, treating landscape as a very subsidiary theme in much the same spirit with which it is indicated on the Han stones. But the landscapes of his contemporaries, Tai K'uei and his eldest son Tai Po, are described as far superior to those of Ku K'ai-chih;[1] and no doubt the painting in the Meyer collection attributed to another famous contemporary, Wang Hsi-chih,[2] is a clue to the new type of landscape art that was now produced. Wang Hsi-chih influenced above all things the history of calligraphy, breaking up the classic tenets through the introduction of the much freer running-hand style of writing, and winning for himself the ever unchallenged reputation of being China's most distinguished calligraphist. This same freedom, the evolution of new techniques and new forms, became the ideal of the new school of landscape painters. Figure subjects were at first thrown to the winds by these nature-loving Taoists; in the painting attributed to Wang Hsi-chih not a human note appears; but instead landscapes were painted that had a vigor and spontaneity of which the Han Confucianists, or even the contemporary ones like Ku K'ai-chih, had never dreamed.

The very spirit of the new titles which we find recorded in the art histories points to the character of the change that was taking place. The earliest men, like Wei Hsieh,[3] paint "The Imperial Park" and other subjects that speak of a courtly contact; but soon we find titles like "Clouds before the Wind," "The Moon in the Water," "The Streams, Hills, and Lakes of Wu-chung," and kindred subjects, that put the emphasis of attention upon the en-

[1] See the Li-tai Ming-hua-chi for all these references.

[2] See my article on "A Chinese Primitive" with illustrations, published in the *Hirth Anniversary Volume*. The chances are that the painting is a copy, but it is nevertheless a fine and significant document.

[3] Third and early fourth century.

vironment rather than man. The fifth century artist Wang Wei[1] is described as being so passionately devoted to landscape that he learned to paint "exactly what he saw"; and at the beginning of this same century the scholar-recluse Tsung Ping (A.D. 357–425) writes the first of China's many essays on landscape painting,[2] indicating that a sufficient development had taken place in the art to make it possible for its various techniques to be systematized and recorded. This first attempt was soon elaborated by a more detailed dissertation on "The Set Rules for Painting Landscape, Pines, and Rocks," by the Liang Emperor Yüan-ti;[3] his title implies that the Chinese genius for organization had already begun to lay its iron hand upon the new inspirations, and it is no surprise, therefore, to learn that the author of these "set rules" on landscape painting is a learned Confucian scholar.

Thus does the art criticism of the period, together with its literary productions as we have read them in Li Lung-mien's catalogue, help us to trace the character of this earliest of artistic rebellions. The beauty of a ritualistic existence, the measured rhythms of a regulated art, were scorned by these zealous Taoists, for had not Chuangtzŭ[4] said, in speaking of the ancient life and arts: "Abolish the color scale and the laws of painting, put out the eyes of the painters, and men will again find their natural vision"? What, indeed, should be more natural than that these men, whose whole wisdom rested upon their study of the processes and structure of the universe, should turn to the source of their belief for the terms of its most beautiful expression?

[1] Not to be confused with the more famous T'ang painter of the same name.

[2] Quoted in the Sung Shu, the History of the Sung Kingdom (A.D. 420–479), in the Li-tai Ming-hua-chi (Chap. 6, p. 2b), and in the P'ei-wên-chai Shu-hua-p'u. Some modern scholars have supposed this essay to be a forgery because it is not mentioned under Tsung Ping's biography in the Sung Shu, but the Chinese histories mention only very famous literary productions, and the fact that it is quoted in the Li-tai Ming-hua-chi argues in favor of its genuineness.

[3] *Circa* A.D. 552. [4] Chuangtzŭ lived 330 B.C. See his Chap. 10.

VIII

In the light of this ancient and unswerving faith in the environment, it becomes almost self-evident what the rôle of the Taoist artist and the purpose of his plastic expression must necessarily have been. Since the world of values was one with the world of form, and since there was no approach to values except through form, aesthetics became the key to man's understanding of the universe. To a people for whom ideals were not real, apart from their instrumentalities, and for whom truth was conveyable only in terms of reality, the artist became the high-priest, the chief interpreter of the very meaning of life. He expressed for his fellow-beings the joy of the human intellect revelling in its comprehension of the actual, and art became an ever alluring, never ending search to interpret by means of line and space their understanding of the intellectual love of God.

This thoughtful attitude toward his environment made two things obligatory for the Taoist artist. His respect for actuality, his belief that "earth will be accepted before she helps," made necessary an intimate knowledge of his object, and his further belief that the object is comprehensible only as a part of the whole, as a phase of that unity which he called the "Tao," made it imperative to represent the object comparatively, in an interpretative contrast with other objects. To convey his minute knowledge of the object, he was obliged to develop a subtle and varied technique; and in order to express his sense of the relativity of all things, his feeling for composition had to become as delicate and exact as was his thinking. In this way the Taoist artists achieved, according to their various abilities and understanding, a metaphysical reality, and expressed it more accurately than language ever could, inasmuch as words are more elusive than forms and spaces. They painted reason — succeeded in expressing organically a whole system of philosophic thought.

Their sense of design, like that of the Confucians, was not a personal fancy, but an equally racial conception that they had gleaned through countless ages from the revolutions of the firmament and the progress of the seasons. This inner sense of coördination, which generation after generation had helped to make more exquisite, was reimposed by them on outward circumstance. The Tao, which they and their ancestors had learned to feel in nature, they sought to state in its own terms; but in the earliest executions of this concept they, unlike the Confucians, were free. No ancient heritage of usefulness had early linked them with the state. No powerful tradition bound them to express themselves by means of long-established techniques. On the contrary, for an idea that had never before been pictorially represented, it was necessary to find new forms; and this, together with their inherited contempt for the established and conventional, brought it about that the tradition of novelty and independence was just as firmly established for the Taoists as had been the tradition of adherence for the Confucian artists. It became as much a custom for the Taoist temperaments to seek the individual and the strange as it was customary for the classically minded to expand the accepted methods of expression. Mi Fei, for example, who spent his whole life struggling against academic art, is just as typical of Chinese traditions, both ancient and modern, as is the classically minded Li Lung-mien.

IX

HAVING defined the origin of the Taoist plastic sense, there follow some necessary postulates concerning its characteristics. Since the significance of nature was the only thing of greater importance than nature itself, the Taoist artist strove primarily for an intellectual rather than a visual representa-

tion of the object, and sought to establish its solidity rather than its surface. Thus preoccupied by the organic structure, he lost all interest in the accidental phases of nature that so entrance the occidental mind, in the play of light and shadow, in impressionism, in that whole welter of temporary conditions that accompany an object and serve to bury its fundamental features. In a life that was in itself evanescent, in a world that was all flux and flow, the fleeting and the fugitive could not hold the imagination, and only the underlying truth stripped naked of all its transient aspects could be a worthy aim. Although we immediately perceive in a Taoist painting the expression of a sentiment, a belief, further examination reveals that this sentiment has been completely intellectualized through deep knowledge of the expressive potentiality of the object, and through an acute appreciation of its physical relativity. Thus we find that the Taoistically influenced Chinese painters did not work before the object, but loved to let memory sift from a scene or an event all the dross of accidental circumstance, before they were ready to select and to portray its essential features. Their minds and their spirits were both too great to need or to want such a thing as a model; and Li Lung-mien, as we have seen in one of his own texts, would at times paint, with startling retention of the significant happenings, the picture of something that he had experienced nine or ten years before. "To Li Lung-mien," say the native texts again and again, "it was ever the idea that was important."

It was this disdain of superficial actuality that made our conventions of perspective impossible for them. They intellectualized not only form but space, and through the adroit juxtaposition of an earthly and a heavenly plane, learned to imply vast distances, achieving thereby an aerial rather than a terrestrial perspective. To suggest space with the naïve device of large objects in the foreground and small ones in the background would have seemed to

them childishly factual, for such a distance is always measurable, and a measurable distance, for so imaginative a race, was no distance at all.

Nor was their space the mere emptiness that it so often becomes in occidental art, but the most significant, the really essential part of the entire composition. The function of space in the paintings of the Taoists can be best explained by turning to Laotzŭ's discussion of the vacuum in the eleventh chapter of the Tao Tê Ching: "A wheel is made up of thirty visible spokes, but the wheel turns because of the central non-visible space [in the nave]. A vessel is made of visible clay, but the vessel's utility depends upon its non-visible hollowness. Likewise the essential parts of a house are non-visible holes such as its doors and windows. Thus it is the non-visible which renders efficacious."

Not only did they so intelligently suggest the importance of the vacuum, but in portraying the Tao, the constant "becoming" of things, it is manifest that in order to accomplish their aim, they were obliged to imply the presence of the element of time. Aside from the perfect tranquillity which the art of so adjusted a race is bound to convey, the entrancing and seemingly inexplicable charm of their landscapes is also derived from the fact that they convey not the limited fixed impression of a certain scene at a certain moment, but through their highly trained sense of the relativity of objects, they succeed in suggesting the transitional quality of things in time, and introduce thereby into their plastic compositions not only the feeling of infinity, but the sense that eternity and the moment are as one to them. Thus their painting is definitely fourth dimensional, and the conveying of this idea that even space and time are not real apart from their material agencies is one of the noblest triumphs of an artistic genius that never proved inadequate to the subtlest of their thoughts.

Though they were indifferent to temporary effects, they clung to the suggestion of reality, and achieved form, not as our like-minded modern artists do, through an avoidance of representation, but through an emphasis of the essentials, through a synthesis rather than a surrender of externality. Reality, as distinguished from mere actuality, was too significant and too suggestive to be entirely sacrificed; and when at times they were tempted toward a too complete abstraction, they were always saved from it by the fact that they already possessed, in their calligraphy, the most highly developed abstract art that has ever been devised. Whenever the *literati* with more of a philosophic than artistic temperament pushed their paintings, as Mi Fei often did, beyond the representative state, they realized that they were becoming calligraphic, and were forced to admit that nature is ever more suggestive, more varied, and more inventive than even generations of the most active human imaginations.

X

As soon as the individual Taoist subjects and techniques were produced they were speedily formulized through the same repetitional process that had evolved the Confucian type of art. Nor did the Taoist conceptions reach the climax of their growth until they had been elevated and perfected through this exhaustion of their possibilities for development. Thus did Confucianism dominate and sublimate all other influences, even those derived from the elemental source of Taoist genius. Without the constant inflow of these new materials the Confucian machinery could not have functioned. In spite of the exalted beauty of Ku K'ai-chih, we can already feel an exhaustion of the purely Confucian subject-matter, and we clearly sense what a cold and frigid

thing Chinese art would have become without the revivifying assimilation of the rich and varied themes of Taoism. Therefore, all Chinese landscapes, except the very early ones, of which we shall scarcely recover many, have their original and their traditional, their Taoist and their Confucian elements; and while purely Confucian paintings are numerous, purely Taoist paintings are, and always must be, exceedingly rare. Only the first moments of the break toward freedom could give birth to the purely Taoist inspiration; for immediately the new-found ideas became hereditary, and later paintings inevitably show the same varied mixture of Taoism and Confucianism which the Chinese mentality itself presented.

In trying to decide whether a given landscape is more Confucian or more Taoist, more classic or more romantic in its style, the character of the figure painting is always a very helpful clue. Though the Taoists were primarily landscape artists, they also evolved a perfectly distinct treatment of the figure, which in the later form of its development is exemplified in the painting, or copy of a painting, by Li Lung-mien, in the Freer collection, of the Taoist monk Liu Hai and his three-legged toad. I have not yet been able to gather enough material to clarify the origin and development of Taoist figure painting, for the examples of such subjects in Mr. Freer's collection are comparatively late in date, but in the T'ang and Sung landscapes the two schools are already quite distinct. Whenever the style of the landscape is academic, notably so in the subjects originated by Li Ssŭ-hsün and his son Li Chao-tao, the figures are treated in the noble simplicity of the classic tradition; and whenever a landscape is made in the free and more calligraphic Taoist manner, as in the paintings by Mi Fei, the figures also are loosely drawn and constructed, are seen in the poetic and individual vein rather than as social types. Moreover, it is interesting to see that the Sung painters who traditionalized

the new Taoist techniques, especially the followers of Wang Wei, used the Confucian manner of painting the figure as clear proof of their academic habit of mind. Those men who painted in both ways, as most of them were capable of doing, usually did the figures in the classic style and dress for academic landscapes, and in the careless calligraphic manner when their landscape was more romantic in mood.

Under such conditions, when men gave their artistic individualities to the world by means of the same subjects and the same strokes, it may be inferred that a dull uniformity must have prevailed; and there did, indeed, exist a large body of mediocre men whose work is painfully monotonous. But the great Chinese artists achieved styles that are as distinct as are our handwritings, though we use in them the self-same alphabet. Those men who succeeded in transcending the tradition became giants of strength, and upon the lesser talents it always imposed a minimum of high conception and able workmanship. Moreover, the advantages of this traditionalism reach the observer as well; for having once established in our minds the general themes of the Chinese painters, we are forced, after eliminating the already familiar content, to centre our interest upon the art with which it is presented. Thus there is in no other art field the same obligatory training for the eye, no instrument more exquisite for the refining of the purely aesthetic perceptions and sensibilities.

Artists who inherit both subject-matter and technique are bound, as the only method left them for expressing originality, to develop their accepted vehicles through depth of insight, and to perfect its expression through the specifically aesthetic side of their production. This fact made for a great mental profundity and a powerful and infinitely varied plasticity in those men who were strong enough to lift themselves above a mere reiteration of their inherited formulas. A great artist was therefore not only a man capable of comprehending pro-

found social or philosophic theories, but one who brought to them his own contributions, as well as the inordinate skill that is necessary if the hand is to state such subtle accents of the mind. Nor could they hope, with such restrictions and such high demands, to win favor with a jaded public by eccentricity of thought, with mere tricks of technique, or with a bizarre selection of subjects. These superficialities, which a less circumscribed artist is only too apt to call to his assistance, they could never use to excite a temporary enthusiasm; they were bound, in order to stand out successfully before a critical and cultured public, to think further, to feel more deeply than their fellow-men, and to develop, through a practice that began with the first childish attempts at calligraphy, the unhindered coördination of brush and brain that was needed to give their intellectual and emotional superiority its full value.

This inevitable emphasis of method rather than subject-matter also kept their art from becoming literary. Their paintings, especially those of Li Lung-mien, have almost invariably a narrative or didactic content; but he could tell a story just as he could point a moral, without for an instant sacrificing his plastic purposes to any other. This is one of the greatest achievements if compared with the eternal struggle in the occidental world, particularly among the more sentimentally inclined of our races, between the poetizing element of life and the more controlled, more sternly artistic processes of plastic representation. We have produced an ample number of monumental constructive geniuses, but we have rarely been able plastically to depict a narrative without falling into a lesser form of expression that has a strongly literary appeal when it is not purely illustrative in character. The Italians have some fourteenth century frescoes which represent the nearest approach to this bold fusing of several arts, but there we usually find the story broken into separate fragments, whereas the Chinese scrolls, though they used this device in some

of the early paintings, soon succeeded in unfolding a panorama of continued narrative, portrayed with an unbroken and evenly sustained plastic invention. At any moment the eye rests upon a completely satisfactory composition which, in many, particularly of the landscape scrolls, reveals through its gradual changes the development, the climax, and an ever restful solution of the situation that is being developed.

Just as they succeeded in life in seeing spirit and matter, the ideal and the real, as a single whole, thus in art, substance and form were so inseparable that the one became unthinkable without the other. Form was nothing if not the adequate expression of the idea. To them as to the art-haunted intellect of Henry James, "Form is substance to that degree that there is absolutely no substance without it."

That the reverse of this proposition is also true, that there can be no form without substance, is equally demonstrated by the history of Chinese art. As long as their philosophic outlook remained powerful and spontaneous, as long, more particularly, as the Taoist battle for individual liberty was maintained, so long was China and Chinese painting one of the finest experiments in organized freedom that the world has ever seen. Not until the end of the Sung dynasty, when their faith in the Tao, in the guiding power of reality, was weakened, and Confucianism became established as an unchallenged routine, did art itself grow mechanical and over-institutionalized. The technique of the Ming artists was often as fine as that of the Sung artists; the excellence of their critical work indicates that their sensibilities were just as keen; but their intellects had lost that grandeur of comprehension which distinguished their ancestors, and the impulse to record the rhythmic harmony of the universe had lessened. The most skilful hand cannot convey what the mind has not experienced, and these later works of men without faith in the world are like

those wondrous shells that one finds upon the beach, from which the life that they enfolded has gone forever.

XI

WHETHER the aesthetic Confucian background and its intense cultivation of all new subjects and techniques or the spirit-freeing power of Taoism and its inherent morphology are the more important factors in Chinese art, it is no easier to determine than to decide in our own culture whether the classic or the romantic eras are the greater. Each person is drawn to the thing that is nearer to his own needs; and it is neither tendency alone but the magnificent merging of the two that makes Chinese art so inexhaustible a source of beauty and wisdom. Consoling, however, to those who feel that emotion can best express itself, even in its profoundest depths, through the intellectual conquest of introspection and mysticism, is the staunch objectivity and the structural firmness manifested in the literary and in the artistic achievements of this Chinese romanticism. These works prove beautifully and conclusively that the non-factual, the poetizing element in life need not be the ingrown product, the sickly mixture of egoism and tears, which the Occident has so often made of it. The history of Chinese pictorial art demonstrates that, in order to sustain an artistic continuity expressive of the social continuity, it is necessary to have a classicism that is firmly rooted in the life of the race; but it shows with equal certainty that romanticism is not the diseased condition of the intellect that Goethe would have it seem; that, on the contrary, it is a normal and necessary refertilization of the race-mentality whenever its classicism becomes sterile.

It must not, however, be supposed that I am inventing categories when I divide the mainsprings of Chinese art into those of Confucian and those of

Taoist origin, for the Chinese themselves recognized such a division when they spoke of the Northern and Southern schools. In the Chin dynasty, when the Taoists first broke up the classic art tenets, this spiritual rebellion was confined exclusively to South China,[1] while the north remained traditional and Confucian in its thought and its art forms. This temperamental division showed itself not merely in painting, but necessarily expressed itself in literature, calligraphy, and even in the very games that were used as diversions. At that time the significance of the term Northern as classic and Southern as individualistic became fixed; and though in the T'ang dynasty the two artistic styles were no longer geographically separated, these epithets were later applied to the art of Li Ssŭ-hsün and Wang Wei because the former was so firmly traditional and the latter so original in his compositions and techniques.

The cause for this local development of the two movements must be purely political, but the Chinese authors who discuss the point give us the fact without explanation. For corroboration I quote once more the article by Liu Shih-p'ei in the Kuo-ts'ui Hsüeh-pao for 1907:

"Since the Chin period the fashion grew upon the scholars in private and public life to cultivate the arts of calligraphy, painting, and chess. The southerners in an independent manner showed a poetical and transcendent spirit, while the northerners painstakingly tried to preserve the traditional and dignified. Thus in calligraphy the southerners were at their best when they practised the informal [t'ieh] styles and the northerners were strong in stone inscriptions [pei]; for the style of the Southern school was easy, free, and graceful, and the hsing [intermediate style between text and running-hand] and the ts'ao [running-hand] forms of calligraphy were greatly in vogue; Yang Hsin, Liu Huai, Hsiao Tzŭ-yün, and Wang Sêng-ch'ien, modelling their writings after

[1] See the official *History of the Chin Dynasty*, also *supra*, page 37 and note.

Wang Hsi-chih and his son, indulged their wildest fancies in a florid and graceful style, with the result that all traces of the square seal-characters [li] were effaced day by day. On the other hand, the Northern school was sedate and simple, and conformed to all set rules and established standards; as its general style was modelled upon that of more recent calligraphists, and also upon the old forms of the Han period, the strokes were strong and upright, embodying in the square forms the spirit of roundness."

The author then traces the same temperamental division between north and south in their literary style, and ends:

"I point out these two arts to illustrate that the division of the fine arts into two schools[1] —Northern and Southern — began at about the period of Eastern Chin [A.D. 317–420]. This division prevailed without change right down to the time of Sui. While by the Northern school the ancient styles and methods were preserved, the Southern school evolved a world of new ideas and tendencies."

He then goes on to show how the Southern school developed art critics such as the famous Hsieh Ho (end of fifth century) and Yü Chien-yü, who gradually disseminated southern ideas in the north and broke up the geographical division of styles so that no such classification obtained for the country by the beginning of the T'ang dynasty. The names, however, had become so definitely indicative of the two schools of Chinese thought that their use was illuminating even when the geographic significance was lost; and the application of the term Northern or Confucian to Li Ssŭ-hsün, and Southern or Taoist to Wang Wei, indicates clearly that the Chinese recognized but the two influences in their landscape art, and ignored the Buddhist element that our occidental critics have always wished to see there.

This analysis differs from the opinions on this question expressed by Giles

[1] This date also supports my previous arguments concerning the beginnings of Chinese landscape painting.

in his "Introduction to the History of Chinese Pictorial Art,"[1] by Laufer in his article on Wang Wei,[2] and by Mather in his much quoted essay on Chinese Art;[3] but in the historical outline by Liu Shih-p'ei we have the explanation of one of the most learned of modern Chinese scholars. Moreover, none of our occidental critics has advanced an alternative explanation of these terms, but they all admit vaguely that the use of the adjectives Northern and Southern "implies something like our own ill-defined antithesis between the classic and romantic." Though this difference may be "ill-defined" in our cultural development, it is very clearly separated in China as the Confucian and Taoist influences, and to this extent even the occidental writers support the Chinese interpretation of these designations.

In order to see how landscape styles changed from Southern to Northern, became academic and Confucianized, one need only follow the evolution of the techniques of Wang Wei, the greatest exponent of Taoist art. For in a single generation his startlingly free forms were traditionalized by copyists like Li Shêng (tenth century) and Yen Wên-kuei (early eleventh century); even a painter like Kuo Hsi (tenth century), though he had his own brilliantly original techniques, did very abstract mountain scenes in the academic style that had evolved from the romanticism of Wang Wei. Very rarely, indeed, do we find landscape painters like Wang Wei and Li Ssŭ-hsün who were wholly committed to one style or the other. Most of the later men, like Li Ch'êng, Tung Yüan, and Fan K'uan, were adepts at both manners, but rarely mingled them in a single picture, as we shall find Li Lung-mien had the courage and the art to do. No history of Chinese landscape art can be written until the critics clearly understand the quality of each of these styles, together with their political and philosophical significance; and had the students of

[1] Second edition, p. 46. [2] *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift*, April, 1912. [3] *The Nation*, Vol. XCIII.

Chinese painting but earlier felt the need for this, we might have been spared the ignis fatuus of the Buddhist influence.

XII

Since Chinese pictorial art was born of the happy intermingling of traditionalism and individualism that has just been described, how could Buddhism have influenced the situation? All that can be said for it, with actual proof to support the statement, is that it brought additional material in the way of figure subjects for the Confucian process to work upon. This material was colorful, bizarre, and stimulating, but it was not the result of such deep philosophic need for aesthetic formulation as lay in Taoist thought, and therefore the Buddhistic art-product brought no such new and magnificent comprehension of the meaning of form. The Buddhas and Lohans that came to China as models could, at best, have had no more plastic content than is shown in the great majority of the frescoes of religious origin in the early temples and caves; but the Confucian intellect took these foreign designs, and grafted them upon the life-giving body of its own vital plasticity. That is why Buddhist figure painting became invigorated in China and remained flaccid in every other country. In China the root-stock was splendidly alive and the new graft flourished; in other countries where there was no native growth to which Buddhism could affix itself, the result was one of completely arrested development. Such art as Buddhism produced in the other countries to which it was transplanted, in Thibet, Java, Turkestan, Cambodia, was of importance both historically and culturally because without this influence these lands and peoples would have been robbed of their greatest developing factor. For them the value of Buddhism can scarcely be exaggerated, but in China, where it

was completely overshadowed both by the indigenous systems of thought and their aesthetic motivations, this foreign influence should be given only its proportionate value.

The one specifically Buddhist contribution to the early cultural manifestations of China was stone sculpture of the human form in low relief and in the round. As we are tracing out the antecedent influences of Sung pictorial art, sculpture may seem an extraneous theme, and yet it must be touched upon for the purpose of contrasting its history with that of the Buddhist figure paintings.

The beginning of Buddhist sculpture marks the first appearance of a popular art in China. The people, the anonymous multitude, deliberately deprived from earliest times of all instruction, had from the first taken the leading part in the Buddhist movement, and they now took over the creation of an iconography that should satisfy their needs. Though we hear of an occasional artist like Tai K'uei,[1] who deliberated over a statue of Buddha for three years, the production of these sculptures, whether in separate pieces or in the amazing groups at Yung-kang, Lo-yang, and Lung-mên, was, on the whole, communal, the work of artisans rather than of artists.

Though the Chinese had some few isolated examples of free sculpture before the advent of Buddhism, their highly developed calligraphic training led them to prefer a similar treatment of stone, and their native religious sense was too unanthropomorphic to have developed an interest in sculpture of the human form. The Buddhist engravings on stone, such as the wonderful and well-known procession of donors at Lung-mên, remained Chinese in style, as they were based directly upon the Han stones of similar character; but for the figures in high relief China afforded no models, and these, as well as the free-

[1] See the Li-tai Ming-hua-chi under his name.

standing figures, are either South Indian or Gandharan in their plasticity as well as in posture and decoration.

The South Indian influence was the nobler, and when it survived in Chinese reproductions in a pure state, Buddhist sculpture was often fine even in China. The Gandharan stones, hybrid offspring of a decadent Greece and the hard realism of North India, were unpleasant even in origin, and when they had been imitated by a Chinese artisan whose training and instincts were against the use of the human form as a subject, it is not surprising that the result was seldom agreeable, and often very awkward. Moreover, as the Amidist faith spread, the demand for sculptures grew enormously, and it soon became more important to enumerate mechanically the symbols of sanctity than to achieve plastically the atmosphere of holiness. At times, especially in the North Wei period, in which the early Indian influence was strongest, Buddhism produced occasional pieces that are fine, but even the most beautiful specimens are not often plastically perfect, and it is no exaggeration to say that the majority of Buddhist sculptures are aesthetically negligible.

Through increase in demand and decrease in freshness of inspiration, Buddhist sculpture soon degenerated, even in those provinces where the models and native workmanship were finest, from communistic production to what can be designated as a manufacture of idols. In order to realize the genius of Buddhism as compared with the genius of China, one need only visualize the monotonous repetition of the soft and sinuous forms that represent the best examples of Buddhist sculpture, with the austere and vigorous beauty of line in the endless variety of contemporary grave figures, of the bronzes, both useful and religious, or the potteries of all sorts in which the indigenous Chinese sense of form continued to find expression. It may be said that this repetition in the Buddhist sculptures was due to ritualism, but the Chinese objects with

which we are comparing them were no less ritualistic, and yet they never lost their strength or individuality.

When we turn to Buddhist figure painting we find that much of it was just as communal, just as mediocre and uninteresting, as was most of the sculpture. This nameless mass of work, of which the important Stein collection at the British Museum and most of the frescoes at Tun-huang[1] are the finest examples, ever remained foreign and flat in character, whether it was produced in China or elsewhere. It consisted simply of pleasant outline drawings that were filled in with brilliant color.[2] If we compare these products with the achievements of any one of the great T'ang figure painters, such as Wu Tao-tzŭ,[3] his pupil Lu Lêng-chia, or even the later Kuan-hsiu,[4] as well as Li Lung-mien,[5] himself, we can appreciate the difference between the vigorous Chinese mentality and that of the Buddhist pattern-makers. In order to be definite, let us study what actually happened in contemporary paintings to any given Buddhistic art convention after its translation into Chinese modes of expression. Take for example the change that took place in the well-known schematic treatment of the muscles, particularly in the arms and legs of the figures of Lohans. The custom of outlining the muscle-formation came from India and Thibet, where it was originated to denote the effects of the ascetic life. The use of this technique in the foreign paintings, and also in the anonymous, purely religious productions in China, is quite devoid of any three-dimensional feeling. The lines exist only as a flat design, and even to the devotee the effect

[1] Pelliot, *Les Grottes de Touen-Houang.*

[2] Hirth, *Native Sources for the History of Chinese Pictorial Art*, English version of A. E. Meyer, pp. 14, 15.

[3] Although Wu Tao-tzŭ's work is known only through copies, these and the paintings of his pupils sufficiently define its character.

[4] A great painter of Buddhist subjects who lived *c.* A.D. 936.

[5] See illustrations of Lohan paintings.

as a ritualistic symbol must have been weakened by its failure to suggest the vividness of life. In the paintings of the great T'ang masters this convention becomes an instrument for the construction of amazing studies in form. What was an inanimate series of lines becomes an opportunity for building up perfectly related and plastically significant masses, and a convention of purely religious origin becomes a convention of aesthetic value.

With a different public and a different motive for production, it is but natural that the Buddhist paintings of truly Chinese provenance should differ from those of other countries. These paintings were made to appeal not to the great mass of the faithful, but to a much smaller and much more artistically cultivated public. The foreign models were transformed because they were shifted from the religious traditions of Buddhism to the older, more sternly aesthetic traditions of Chinese pictorial art, and when Buddhist figure painting is artistically and not merely historically noteworthy, this is due, not to the foreign ritualistic contributions, but to the ancient Chinese sense of rhythm to which these symbols were made to conform.

This is the main distinction between Chinese and other Buddhist paintings. In India, Thibet, and elsewhere, they were philosophic conceptions executed for the illustration of a religious idea; in China they were plastic conceptions whose appeal was strictly aesthetic. They were lifted into an entirely different level of thought, from that of local to that of universal value.

Buddhist sculpture deteriorated in China because it had no real relationship to Chinese thought and expression; Buddhist figure painting became great because it was carried along on the powerful current of Chinese pictorial art.

For those who have no opportunity to study the original objects, the history of Buddhist art in China from the fifth to the eleventh centuries is roughly

outlined in the four volumes of photographs of "Les Grottes de Touen-Houang" which have been published by Pelliot. The sculpture[1] in these caves soon becomes mediocre even when it has not been restored. The stereotyped Buddhist paintings[2] are found in large quantity, as has already been stated, but they are the very best of their kind, and occasionally the designs rise to a high level of loveliness and grace.[3] Charming as these things are, they cannot compare with the four portraits of Lohans,[4] which must have been done by some great Chinese artist who had learned to weld together the Buddhist outlines and the firm structural sense of his own race. In addition to these fine examples of Sino-Buddhist portraiture, we find in the numerous processions of donors,[5] both male and female, superb examples of what can be called purely Chinese art. The figures, horses, carts, and all the decorations of these paintings are closely related to the Confucian paintings of the fourth and fifth centuries, which were in turn derived from the stone engravings of Han. We can here compare the facile quality of Buddhist art at its best with the restrained but vigorous forms of the ancient Chinese school of art, and gain a fairly clear conception of the amalgamation that took place between the two.

Once China had absorbed the Buddhist designs, the same traditionalizing process began that has been explained in connection with the Taoist subjects. It may be said that I have objected to the constant restatements of Buddhism, but praise those of China. The difference, however, between Confucian and Buddhist conservatism is that the former, at least during the periods which we are discussing, was a critical evolutionary progress to which each genera-

[1] Volume III, Plates 191, 192 are among the best.

[2] Volume I, Plates 15 to 22 and Plates 52 to 61.

[3] Volume III, Plates 157, 173. [4] *Ibid.*, Plates 158 to 161.

[5] Volume I, Plates 44 to 49. Volume II, Plates 92, 116.

tion added its contributions, whereas the latter was nothing but a continuous reverberation.

Robbed of its obfuscating religious nimbus, the Buddhist influence, from the point of view of the pictorial history of China, is a phase of the general interest of the Chinese in everything that was foreign, so especially vivid during the Han period and again during that of T'ang. So considered, a Buddhist subject has the same value as any of the innumerable delineations of foreign tribes and foreign customs. The acquisition of all this new material enriched the Chinese tradition and acted as an additional incentive, especially to figure painters like Wu Tao-tzŭ and Han Kan; but creatively speaking, these foreign influences, whether lay or religious, must take their places among the constant absorptions that China as the greatest eastern power, both physically and intellectually speaking, continually practised upon her surroundings as long as her superiority continued.

If Buddhism had an enlivening effect upon the figure painting of China, it could have been only deleterious to the development of landscape art, when it did not consent merely to reinforce the Taoist principles. Taoist art, as we know it, was too profound an expression, too intimately bound up with life, to be expanded by the sentimental Buddhistic attitude toward nature; and if the Buddhists, as such, had any effect upon that close union of truth and beauty, they must have weakened it by the intrusion of mystic ideas that obscured the firmness of the Taoist beliefs, and broke, rather than built up, the clarity of Taoist morphology. Of all the many writers who have poetized on the subject of Buddhism and Chinese landscape painting, only Petrucci in his "La Nature dans la Peinture Chinoise" advances something like an explanation of the miracle. He says that Buddhism brought to intellectual China a much needed emotional stimulus. He gives no proofs of his statement, nor does he

explain just when the transfusion took place; but any one who knows the magnificent zeal of Confucian essays, or the passionate force of Taoist poetry, can scarcely be persuaded that China was in need of any greater emotional powers than she already possessed.

Even in the field of figure painting the large group of Taoist subjects, with its innumerable heroes and supernatural beings, had also broadened the Confucian techniques, and it is difficult, for lack of early material, to measure the precedence and relative importance in this field of the Taoist and Buddhist influences. What is certain, however, is that both flourished because they fell into the hands of people who had already learned how to paint, and because they underwent the same developmental Confucian process which so dominated and so unified an infinite variety of aesthetic inspirations, that they can all rightly be grouped together under the name of Chinese art.

XIII

Only if we have grasped this process of constantly elevating the individual to the typical factor which the Confucian system imposed upon the pictorial evolution of China, can we appreciate the history of Chinese art, and the position of Li Lung-mien in that evolution; for in Li's work we see China's powerful classicism at the moment of its widest potency. Not until the main stream of China's art tradition had assimilated all the tributaries which were to feed its onward sweep do we find, as the culmination of this mingling of forces, the all-embracing art of Li Lung-mien. Therefore his classicism was a very different thing from the pure Confucianism of the Han and earlier dynasties. Just as the Confucianism of the Sung dynasty differed from that of the Han dynasty through the broadening of its contacts, so the art of Li Lung-mien

differed from that of a Ku K'ai-chih or a Lu T'an-wei, for it unified all the new aesthetic inspirations into something larger and freer than had heretofore existed in the field of Chinese plastic invention.

The fact that Li Lung-mien was the most eclectic of China's painters does not necessarily imply that his period represents the climax of Chinese art. The mightiest art is produced when inspirations are fresh, and there is no better way of sensing the quality of Li Lung-mien's work than by comparing it boldly with the harvest of that happy T'ang period when so many of the art enthusiasms were young and powerful. Having indicated how he differed from that glorious era which absorbed thirstily the new and the strange, we can turn to a comparison with the staid Confucian painters of the fourth and fifth centuries, and show with equal clarity how Li Lung-mien was bound to differ from them also, because of the great mental impacts that had intervened.

The most varied and most creative period of Chinese art had occurred more than three hundred years before Li Lung-mien was born, during the reign of the Emperor Ming-huang (A.D. 713–756), when most of China's art traditions were permanently established. Then it was that Wu Tao-tzŭ painted temple decorations which China has not forgotten, though they have been destroyed for over a thousand years; then Han Kan and his master Ts'ao Pa did their brilliant horse paintings; then Li Ssŭ-hsün and his no less famous son Li Chao-tao, between military campaigns, poured forth their cataracts of green and gold, while Wang Wei, their rival landscape artist, with more individualistic vision, created a technique that became the ideal of an endless chain of followers. Then it was that all the new art influences, both indigenous and foreign, were at their height; and this active rivalry gave to the T'ang period an elemental vigor which the later, more assimilated Sung period

could not possess. Wu Tao-tzŭ's Lohans still speak strongly of his foreign models; Han Kan's ancient horse traditions, as a sign of the free communication that existed with the west, are adorned with barbaric Tartar trappings and led by gorgeously embellished Tartar chiefs. Li Ssŭ-hsün, to be sure, as well as his brilliant son Li Chao-tao, is purely indigenous and academic; both of them are Confucianized Taoists like Li himself, and therefore often resemble him in their landscape forms; but Wang Wei's dominant Taoism creates new and vigorous techniques that clearly indicate how, as a rule, in that period, originality was besting tradition.

We see in these paintings how eager China was to submit her own ideas to the test of new and especially of foreign contacts; but in the paintings of Lung-mien, though he treats the identical subjects, we realize that the aesthetic, and therefore the mental, doors of China had, in the meantime, closed upon the influences of the outer world. For Li's art has lost entirely the lure of the foreign and the exotic, so marked in the T'ang masters, and has become essentially Chinese. The barbaric splendor of Han Kan has disappeared in the work of his pupil. In Li Lung-mien's day, tribute horses still poured into the imperial stables; but, in Li's paintings, this earliest of Confucian traditions has been purged once more of its obvious foreign influence, and the horses of Lung-mien have forgotten their Tartar origin. In Buddhist subjects, he was avowedly the pupil of Wu Tao-tzŭ, but the violent agitation of that master's line, borrowed from his foreign models, is subdued, in the Lohans of Lung-mien, to a suavity and grace that bespeak the native scholar's demeanor; the strange features are retained, but their harshness is softened to approach more nearly the kindly and cultivated lineaments of China.

The absence of the foreign in Li's art is explicable, if we realize that the

artists of China, since the reign of Ming-huang, had one and all spent their time analyzing and reanalyzing the ideas and strokes of their great predecessors, until a complete Chinese assimilation had been established. Not a single new influence had made itself felt in the meantime; and, though in Li's art the earlier material is amplified and raised to a supreme degree of plastic expression, there does not appear, even in his work, a single note that had not already been sounded by the various T'ang masters. The value of Confucian traditionalism lay, after the advent of Taoism and Buddhism, not in the finding of new subjects, but in the aesthetic perfection which it achieved for material that was already at hand. From the point of view of substance, its creative days were largely over; from the point of view of form, its creations were still sublime.

No adverse criticism of the art of the great landscape and figure painters of the ninth and tenth centuries is implied in this. Their modifications of the classic heritage were often original and significant; but their constant recreation of earlier work no doubt explains why Lung-mien ignores them so completely, and seeks his masters among the giants that made the eighth and earlier centuries illustrious in the annals of Chinese art. Never does he copy the paintings of the men who lived during this interim; so completely did he neglect them that with the exception of one Tartar horse painter,[1] he never so much as mentions their names. Yet he, like the predecessors he ignores, was the product of his age; he, too, could but carry on the process of artistic reincarnation, and recreate with his Confucian imagination all the materials that the outer world had wafted to his shores.

[1] The Prince of Tung-tan. See Category I, No. 14.

XIV

THEREFORE it is not surprising to find Li Lung-mien declaring the firmest allegiance to the more classical masters such as Ku K'ai-chih and Lu T'an-wei, rather than to the later men. The Chinese critics, moreover, are agreed that these two classic painters exerted the greatest influence upon his work. The opinions to this effect of the Hsüan-ho Hua-p'u and of Su Tung-p'o have already been given. In analyzing Li's style in the Buddhist painting of the "King of Hell,"[1] Su Tung-p'o, who was one of the finest of Sung connoisseurs, again states that, in addition to the ideas of Wu Tao-tzŭ, who was probably the originator of the subject, Li has "caught the spiritual beauty of Ku and Lu." Again and again his Buddhist and Taoist paintings are spoken of as "antique" in style; and K'ung Kuang-t'ao, in his "Notes on Calligraphies and Paintings,"[2] while discussing Li's picture of "Laotzŭ Delivering the Tao Tê Ching,"[2] asserts specifically that Lung-mien painted the draperies of his figures in the manner of Ku K'ai-chih. We often find Li proving his admiration for these early masters through numerous copies of their paintings,[3] and of painters like Chou Fang[4] who, though they lived in a later age, were themselves completely captivated by the same severely classical use of line and space.

This gradually growing ascendancy of traditionalism in art, from the eighth century onward, only parallels what the catalogue describes as happening in the world of politics, literature, and philosophy. It is therefore but natural to find Li Lung-mien, even in his Taoist and Buddhist paintings, looking back for aesthetic guidance to the purely Confucian technicians of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries. The austerity of their form, the limpid flow of their line, appeal to him more than does the powerful, less circumscribed art of a Wu

[1] Category III, No. 60.

[2] *Ibid.*, No. 53. See also illustration No. 15.

[3] Category II, Nos. 28, 29, 36, etc.

[4] *Ibid.*, No. 27.

Tao-tzŭ, because his conception of life was closer to that of the earlier masters than it was to that of the men of T'ang. He might take his subject from any moment of China's development, but the plastic form that he gave those various subjects was bound to be the product of his own experience. Since his thought and life were much closer to that of the classical period, so also was his art. His rhythm, therefore, lost entirely the passionate note of the T'ang dynasty, and returned to the ordered serenity, the noble dignity, of a mentality that moved once more in the unquestioned routine of a Confucian universe.

How could it be otherwise? The Sung dynasty merely thought what the men of T'ang had deeply felt; whereas the earlier painters were either Confucian or Taoist or Buddhist, Li was all three of these, and the very breadth of his interests made the predominance of emotional intensity impossible. Always do we find in Li's aesthetics a highly intellectualized treatment of his materials; and his superb artistic achievements, the absolutely unrivalled beauty of his work, remove for all time, from the life of the mind, the taint of the commonplace and the unimaginative with which modern aesthetics attempts to surround it. Emotion played its inevitable part in the mental processes of Li Lung-mien, or he could not have entered so fully into the portrayal of little children, alluring fairies, beautiful women, the entire gamut of Taoist dreams or Buddhist fancies; but those sensuous perceptions were always clarified by a relentless analysis of all things felt. It is the very first implication of his lucid compositions that the artist lived in complete awareness of the self and the environment, and through his intelligent acceptance of this constant interrelationship, poured forth a perfectly balanced and perfectly comprehended plastic universe, which was no less imaginative because it was also intelligible. The modern conception of the artist, as expressed by

Bergson, that he must attempt to achieve an emotional union with his object, that he must "enlarge his perception without trying to rise above it,"[1] would have seemed to Li Lung-mien so much delusion, a mere playing with words, and a complete failure to realize the very function of art. For art to Li Lung-mien manifestly meant one thing: it meant the deliberate imposition of an ancient Confucian sense of form and order upon all the emotional stimuli, whether Taoist or Buddhist or strictly Confucian; and his harmony with the object consisted in the deepest possible understanding from without, not in a subjective reading into the object of the human emotional states.

It is a mark of Li's intellectuality that there is about his work a distinctness of line and composition, an utter clarity, such as only the unmystical type of mind can achieve. Here is no blurring of objects or of outline, but all forms are fully revealed, bathed in the bright sunshine of a complete perception. The tactile qualities of such an art are necessarily highly developed, and the impression of wholeness is so intense, that we are aware of an amazing spatial reality in all figures and forms, of the back of an object as well as of the face it presents to view. The element of the undefined is nowhere in his art permitted to exist, and even in the treatment of the supernatural he does not admit a twilight zone of realization. Thus and thus only did it come about that Li Lung-mien's pictures are above all things distinguished for their intelligent content, for weaving into a superb unity so many different influences that kept their own vitality without destroying his.

Such intellectualism was no prerogative of the Sung dynasty, much less of Li Lung-mien; it was, as the outline of their objective plastic inspirations attempted to show, essentially the characteristic of all Chinese art; but such was the amalgamation of thought in the Sung dynasty that this phase of their

[1] See "Belphegor," by Benda, in *The Dial* for September, 1920.

mental dispositions was sharply emphasized, and Lung-mien, as one of the deepest thinkers of that period, illustrates in a most marked degree what such a tendency could achieve.

XV

Of the purely Confucian subjects, the only one that has so far come down to us is a copy of the famous "Relations between Emperors and their Subjects,"[1] the content of which has been discussed in detail in a previous chapter."[2] This painting, now in the Meyer collection, is not an original by Li Lung-mien; though the lines are very fine, they have by no means the life and force which Li's own work invariably possesses. However, it is an excellent copy and a faithful one, for the arrangement of the compositions corresponds in minutest detail with the careful description given in the catalogue. For these reasons we may be confident that this painting is close to the original in spirit, and that it gives us an adequate idea of Li's style in the treatment of such historical subjects.

The first impression of these figures and their lovely draperies clearly confirms the opinion of the Chinese critics that Li Lung-mien looks back for his prime inspiration to the great masters of antiquity. There is not so much as a trace of foreign influence in this conception of beauty; in its reticence of gesture, its calculated economy of line, its condensation of form, its utter contempt for all the mere prettiness of things, it conveys exactly the same Confucian atmosphere that is found in all Chinese figure paintings, but which can be appreciated in its purest form in those very earliest masters whom Li himself so venerated.

It is the very resemblance of Li's art to that of these primitive painters

[1] See Category II, No. 8. [2] See pages 65–67.

which immediately forces his differences upon our attention. The emperors of Lu T'an-wei never seem so near and real to us as do these emperors of Li Lung-mien. In the early representations of the country's rulers, we feel the majesty and sanctity of that holy office, as well as the dignity with which it was ever surrounded, but the emperors remain types that suggest suitable characteristics, and their lineaments, their very positions, are often as like as two peas. Not so the emperors of Li Lung-mien. These are thoughtful and carefully differentiated individuals, who arouse a personal interest and a personal sympathy. Even their imperial quality becomes an emanation of the personality rather than an effect produced by means of royal accoutrements and a court environment. The attendants have undergone the same individualizing process. Instead of suggesting, through their mere garb, the position which they hold, they have become equally distinctive people, often faithful representations of the descriptions which history had left of their characters and personal appearances.

Not only have these emperors and their subjects become individuals rather than types; several of them show decided traces of humor! This surely is a departure from the sober world of a Ku K'ai-chih! The humorous passages, to be sure, are delicately suggested, and sometimes need an understanding of the text that is inserted between the pictures, to bring them out, but they serve as an almost constant undercurrent which enlivens considerably the action of an otherwise typically ponderous Confucian theme.

XVI

THE flow of gentle amusement which Li Lung-mien permits himself in historical painting becomes at times the broadest kind of satire when he treats

the Buddhistic subjects. In fact, the finer these pictures appear from a plastic point of view, the keener is the humor with which the Lohans pose and gesture. Some of these undated Buddhist paintings can almost be placed in their proper sequence because Li's artistic ability seems visibly to grow with his sense of the ridiculous. In the "Twelve Lohans," which was too fine to be successfully reproduced, and in the "Sixteen Lohans,"[1] both paintings in the Meyer collection, he not only takes pleasure in depicting the jollity of his less solemn-minded subjects, but is obviously poking fun at those who insist upon taking themselves seriously. In these paintings, clearly the products of his full maturity, reverence is replaced with irony, an attitude that is quite unknown in the works of any earlier Buddhist master.

Some of the Lohan portraits, the conceptions, no doubt, of more youthful years, convey none of this critical quality. The earlier Lohans, of which there are several scrolls in the Freer collection, are lovelier, more emotionally felt, in robes whose folds are as liquid as the waves that are gently swelling beneath their feet. In these tenderer conceptions there is also the love of an elaborately ornamental minutiae that could only have been executed by a young artist, who cannot resist the proud and joyous display of an unparalleled technical skill. In Mr. Freer's famous album[2] and in my late scroll of "Sixteen Lohans," this love for the exhibition of mere ornamentation has spent itself, and the artist's efforts are concentrated upon caricature in the finest sense of that term. In these drawings, surface and structure are so perfectly welded together that all detail is swept away; and in spite of their humor, these figures are positively fearsome in the hardness of intellectual and plastic concentration which they imply. The folds of their kashayas have lost the youthful softness and

[1] Not an original painting but a good copy and therefore equally useful as a basis of discussion.

[2] See illustrations, Nos. 16 to 20.

sweep, and have been reduced to the lowest terms of lineal simplicity. The difference between the Greek mentality and that of Confucian China may be seen in the opulent lines of Greece's gracefully draped peplums, and the sobriety, the restraint of line which Li Lung-mien evolves from the same garments.

Complete reality, moreover, is maintained in these paintings, in spite of the use of purely abstract form. The heads of these Lohans, the drawing of their arms, legs, and feet, are as untrue to actuality as the most distorted cubist picture; but the suggestion of reality is preserved through fineness of proportions and forms, through the equilibrium of the figures as a whole, thus giving no offense, as the modern paintings so often do, to the sense of the normal. The sea tosses beneath their feet, sometimes jaggedly, sometimes with a massive amplitude, but always convincingly. The rhythm of the forms evolved from the wave-motions is infinitely varied without ever losing its watery quality, and the harmony which it establishes with the related or contrasted rhythm of the Lohan's robes is of a perfection that only our most beautiful music can equal.

XVII

The ever growing sense of irony in Li Lung-mien's Buddhistic paintings was obviously not a religious influence, nor was the lighter humor of "The Relations between Emperors and their Subjects" Confucian in its origin. To be amused at or with one's divinities, to feel them as vulnerable individualities rather than as long-eared demigods, naturally implies a loss of religious atmosphere, just as the humanizing of the emperors implies the sacrifice of the rigidly impersonal Confucian atmosphere. The Confucian world as it is furnished forth in its pictorial representations was staid, beautiful, and even majestic, but it was a highly serious affair. Its men and women moved with a

serene dignity that tempts a lesser mortal to wonder what happened to these unruffled exteriors when life was depressing or ecstatic, annoying or amusing.

To the true Confucian, life never seems to have been any of these things; and it is to Taoism that we must look, whether in Chinese life, its literature, or its pictorial arts, for all the small delights and tortures of existence. It is in a Taoist influence that we must likewise seek for the explanation of Li Lung-mien's ever present sense of the playful side of life, of the ridiculous, of the witty, and of the satirical. Indeed, one need only think of the overpowering solemnity of the Confucian routine in order to acquire a lively fellow-feeling for that long line of deliciously human spirits that deserted the sacred halls of ceremony for the untrammelled wilds where they could loll about or write poetry, become ribald or intoxicated, at their leisure. Thus, when Li permits himself, in that most augustly Confucian set of illustrations, "The Relations between Emperors and their Subjects," to portray the drunken General Shan Chien being laughed at by village children, or when he brings out the worldly side of the Lohans together with their foibles and the mock-heroic side of their characters, it is the Taoist in him that insists upon rescuing his art from the over-solemn and the dully religious.

Though Li Lung-mien's humor shows that he had no attitude of servility toward his various artistic and philosophic traditions, it shows also that he had no cynicism. Its kindly criticisms, the very beauty of his sly rebukes, persuade the observer that in this Sung eclecticism there was neither surrender nor contempt. Often as we may find Lung-mien laughing at the pomp of Confucian emperors or the sacredness of Buddhist deities, there is always a willingness to recognize the worth in both these systems, and even in his irony, there is a gentleness and a benign comprehension that rob his strongest caricatures of any hint of bitterness.

It is also due to Li Lung-mien's Taoistic independence of mind that we owe the individualizing of his emperors and Lohans, as well as his freshness of attitude toward all the old Buddhistic paraphernalia of ritualism, posture, and decoration. While adhering to all the rules of type for his depictions of Buddhist immortals, Lung-mien was quite original in his presentation of these worthies; for in most cases we find no mention in the art literature, nor has our experience made us aware of any precedence for many of the groupings. The Hua Chi[1] says that "in making his Buddhist images he insisted upon the fantastic and original in order to startle people, and yet he never lost his standard of artistic excellence. Once he depicted a Kuan-yin whose girdle floated behind her more than one and a half times her own length. He also made a Kuan-yin reclining on a rock, a composition probably never seen before. Again, he seated a Kuan-yin cross-legged in a comfortable attitude with hands joined together, giving the appearance of great ease. Li Kung-lin said that the world thought one could not sit in this prescribed manner and be comfortable, but that poise was the result of a mental and not of a physical attitude. Thus we see that a high-minded man and penetrating scholar, no matter how he does a thing, can always succeed."

XVIII

Li carried his originality to the point of introducing into the Buddhist paintings new and extraordinary instruments, and animals whose resemblance to some of the small Han or earlier bronzes indicates that he felt no hesitation in mingling freely the different sources of Sung culture. Frequently he introduces Taoist figures into his Buddhist processions, as well as Taoist sym-

[1] Chap. 3, p. 2b.

bols of all sorts, especially those of distinctly decorative value. The T'ang artists would not have done this, not only because they felt the walls which still existed between the three schools of thought, but because, in the case of the classic influences, they had not the scholarship and the familiarity with the antique which Li Lung-mien possessed. Thus his Buddhist as well as his Taoist paintings were enriched in variety and expressiveness beyond those of his predecessors by the broader reach of his interests and the additional artistic training which these strictly Confucian studies brought with them.

The effect upon the Sung scholars of the classic revival was not narrowing, but, added to the philosophical researches of Taoism and Buddhism, it acted upon their imaginations as did the newly discovered humanistic studies upon Italy of the fourteenth century and upon Germany of the fifteenth century. For the Sung period achieved at the same time the artistic impetus of the Italian Renaissance and the freeing intellectual stimulus that preceded the German Reformation. As Europe broke away from the fetters of Catholicism, so China had broken away from the mental restraints of Buddhism. Since the Chinese had been less enslaved, their emancipation was less violent, less bitter; and, instead of the hatreds and the harsh recriminations of the Reformation, we have good-natured satires; instead of the triumph of a rival faith of equal intolerance and exclusiveness, we have the synthetic mentality of a Li Lung-mien that dared to draw, from any source, whatever seemed to have permanent human values.

Li Lung-mien is the only Sung scholar who expressed this Renaissance artistically in all its different aspects. To think that his breadth and penetration were general characteristics of the artists of this period would be to rob him of his glory. Buddhist art in Li's time was moribund, just as great Confucian figure painting was also a thing of the past; but Li, through his understanding and zeal for all national influences, made both these arts live again.

Sung painting was concentrated almost exclusively on landscape; and Li's many sided artistic interests were only possible, in such an era, because of the fine scholarship that carried him into all sorts of new fields of inquiry. For he was the most learned of all Chinese painters, not excepting the erudite T'ang poet-painter, Wang Wei. Most Chinese painters were, and necessarily had to be, well educated; but Li was one of China's really brilliant and original intellects, a man whose aim to stand beside the ancient sages in scholarship was fully realized. He was able to gather into his work all the intellectual currents of his age as no other painter could, because he was a part of them, because he was in sympathy with, and had helped to create, the catholic atmosphere which his art expressed.

If Taoism was so powerful a stimulus with Lung-mien as to bring the characters and facial expressions of his Lohans from the typical to the individual, it naturally arouses a curiosity as to the style that he used in so definitely Taoist an art as landscape painting. If we turn to the section in the catalogue[1] which lists these subjects, it is immediately notable that we find very few of those strictly Taoist landscape subjects in which the importance of humanity is but lightly indicated or entirely suppressed; and of these few some were made as literal maps, such as the famous scroll of the River Shu;[2] others were copies made because the originals were the work of such great landscape painters as Wang Wei[3] or Li Chao-tao;[4] and some of the original subjects were chosen because the names of historical personages were attached to the scene.[5] Nor could his artistic piety fail to express itself in the depiction of his own homestead,[6] a subject made sacred to all Chinese painters

[1] Category V.

[2] *Ibid.*, No. 16. Now in the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[3] *Ibid.*, No. 12. [4] *Ibid.*, No. 10. [5] *Ibid.*, Nos. 5, 8, 19. [6] *Ibid.*, No. 14.

by the famous Wang-Ch'uan T'u of Wang Wei.[1] In other words, the interest is practical, or it is preponderantly traditional, both Confucian attitudes; and the number of such purely Taoist subjects is comparatively small, even if we add the sixth category, which lists the "Flowers and Birds." In addition, Li has painted magnificent panoramas as backgrounds for many of his figure paintings, both Buddhist and Confucian. Though he was not sufficiently Taoistic to depict pure landscape, he was too much so to resist it as a setting for his figure paintings, a point in which he departs radically from Confucian tradition, and also from that of Buddhist art, so far as we know it. We hear, to be sure, that Wu Tao-tzŭ painted splendid landscapes for some of his Buddhist subjects, but so far as his works are known through the many later copies that still survive, they furnish no precedent for so magnificent a mingling of elaborate landscape and figure painting as, for example, "The White Lotus Club."[2] Even for this painting Li Lung-mien may possibly have had older models on which to base his composition, but thus far no earlier master has been discovered who ventured upon so severe a test of his ability in the different domains of Chinese pictorial expression.

XIX

In none of Li Lung-mien's pictures, or copies of pictures, that has come down to us, can his art in all its diversity be better studied than in this painting of

[1] Category V, No. 12.

[2] See illustrations, plates Nos. 3–14. This painting, together with Mr. Freer's famous Shu River Scroll, his Album of Lohans, and my copy of "Laotzŭ Delivering the Tao Tê Ching," are the only paintings by Li Lung-mien of whose authenticity we can be reasonably certain. There are several other paintings in the Freer collection, as well as in my own group, which are probably Li Lung-mien's work; but we cannot be as sure of these as of the four works mentioned above. For discussion of the subject of "The White Lotus Club," see page 93.

"The White Lotus Club"; for whether it be in landscape, figure painting, or architecture, he never has excelled, never could have excelled, the perfection of this scroll. The exquisite forms that are clothed in a semblance to trees and rocks and water constitute a composition whose structural intellectualization could be carried no further. In spite of such abstraction, for no modern cubist ever was more abstract, representation is never sacrificed; but all the natural phenomena have lost the suggestion of the specific or individual thing, and become symbols, as our Chinese writer expressed it, of the "true and the good." Even the clouds are not mere clouds, but the most careful studies in volume. All impulsive Taoist spontaneity, such as can be found as an illuminating contrast in the landscapes of Li's contemporary Mi Fei, is absent, and in its place we find such mastery of medium and of content, such splendor of imagination combined with such detachment and control, that we are made to feel as if we were looking not at a landscape but at eternity and infinity stated in terms of the visible.

The mingling of Northern and Southern traditions, and the welding of both into a noble unity, is one of the most interesting features of this masterpiece. The river-bank, the way in which the points of land disappear into the water, the leafless trees, are all in the manner of Wang Wei, but the evergreens and heavy foliage, the masses of rock, the distant pointed peaks and the superb convolutions of the cloud forms, are reminiscent of Li Ssŭ-hsün, and strictly academic. The realism of Wang Wei, the feeling he gives one of painting a specific thing, is lost even when his techniques are used; but as compensation, Li Lung-mien has incorporated into the abstract classic treatment of the rock masses, which is taken bodily from Li Ssŭ-hsün, the very surfaces and the layer-like, calligraphic structure which are first found perfected in the paintings of Wang Wei and his school.

In such close interweaving of different styles[1] does Li's work illustrate the fantastic liberality and freedom that characterize Sung Confucianism. A predominantly Taoist temperament, like that of Mi Fei, still felt its hostility to the Academy so keenly that it was forced to work out its own techniques. Like our western artists, Mi Fei spent much of his aesthetic impulse in preoccupation with medium, whereas Li's Confucian mentality felt at liberty to use, and actually did use in "The White Lotus Club," all the great technical achievements that ages of research had evolved. Mi Fei, in reality, was not more free of his environment and heritage, and the struggle against them, of which he is, to be sure, an extreme example, defined and limited his effectiveness; whereas Li Lung-mien, unhampered by the problem of individualism, could reserve his energies for the thing he had to say, and could draw upon unlimited resources for the perfect manner of its saying. For this reason a picture like "The White Lotus Club" contains every current of Chinese culture flowing peacefully together to form a single mighty stream, and represents the culmination of the classic trend in Chinese pictorial art.

An analysis of the various plastic influences in this painting gives at the same time a history of Chinese art and a mental picture of Lung-mien. Though Taoist techniques are used, the treatment of the landscape lifts all the hereditary factors to the typical and abstract. The Lohan figure paintings, we found, were humanized and individualized; but in contrast we now discover that his landscape is elevated from individualism to a superb formula. Li's Taoism still lives in the power and originality of that formula; but if ever there existed in China such a thing as Confucianized landscape painting, in the sense that

[1] The origin of these techniques is still open to much difference of opinion owing to the lack of great numbers of early paintings or good copies. Moreover, the matter can be discussed with clarity only before the objects; but the few points I mention may serve to show how almost inextricably the two great landscape schools of China had been mingled by the Sung painters.

the traditional and stylistic elements predominate, no work is nearer to this impersonal perfection than this painting by Li Lung-mien. As if to keep in harmony with this quality in the landscape, the figure painting and the architecture, though the subject is Buddhist, are so Confucian in their plasticity that, were it not for external details, both might appear in some pre-T'ang painting without being felt as anachronistic from the aesthetic point of view. The restrained and solemnly rhythmical line in the grouping of the figures, the gentle dignity and simplicity of their draperies, are much more reminiscent of Ku K'ai-chih than of the more expansive styles of Wu Tao-tzŭ and his school, or of the impressionistic treatment of Taoist figure paintings. It is to be expected that, in the drawing of the scholar groups, the technical traditions established by Ku K'ai-chih would be followed; but even in the various little figures of Buddhist and Taoist origin that are so beautifully scattered through the landscape, all sense of anything but a classic rhythm has been eliminated. Nor can a touch of the foreign atmosphere, so sought after in the T'ang Buddhist paintings, be found here. Even the humorous element, which Li's Taoist nature could not refrain from introducing in most of his Buddhist subjects, is entirely omitted, and in its stead is the seriousness and stateliness of the classic and impressive side of his nature. The surface lines as well as the planes and volumes of these figures are indigenous in character and attuned to the rigorous demands of a Confucian plasticity.

XX

THE architecture of "The White Lotus Club" is another example of how Buddhist subjects were subdued to the classic technique. The dream-temple which rises from the clouds, as well as its Nirvana-like repetition at the end

of the scroll, is Buddhist in structure, but the rendering of the roof-lines and pillars, as well as that of the minute decorative notes that ornament the superb balustrades, could have been done with such precision and distinction only by an artist who had been trained in the classic school of Chinese architectural painting. Of this art, the technical history goes straight back to the Han stones, and to the early representations of the sumptuous Han palaces in which the T'ang and even previous painters fairly revelled. Thus when Li paints architecture, whether it be, as here, a Buddhist temple, or a purely imaginary palace such as the "Cassia Hall and Epidendrum Palace,"[1] the unearthly fineness of line, the majesty and splendor of contour, as well as the sweep of the imagination which the lofty beauty of these buildings imply, are each the heritage from a remote ancestry that had in reality enjoyed such beauteous and magnificent abodes.

There is, in addition to the ancient stateliness of Li Lung-mien's architecure, another subtle quality that it contains, which is again peculiarly the expression of his own exquisite nature. This quality I can only define by saying that all the architectural features, even the lesser articles of use, are singularly sentient and alive. The divan upon which Laotzŭ sits as he hands the Tao Tê Ching to his reverent disciple, as well as the superb table which stands by his side,[2] the latticed structure about the sacred tree in "The White Lotus Club" or any of the little pavilions and bridges that vary its scenery so graciously,[3] all are of such superb line and proportion that they become something infinitely greater than the structures which they represent. They are as significant, as highly vitalized, as any of the human figures. They are not mere appurtenances, but the embodiment of that cultivated consideration for the smallest details of life, and of that deeply felt sense of equilibrium, which I have tried

[1] In the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution. Too fine for reproduction.

[2] See illustrations, No. 15. [3] See illustrations, Nos. 3–14.

to bring out again and again as the distinctive characteristic of the Chinese, and especially of the Confucian mentality. So developed was this respect for the details of living, that a minute and loving consideration was expended upon every phase of their existences. It is this fineness of mind, this need to express his feeling for a highly sensitized balance, not only in his entire composition but in the least of its parts, that distinguishes Li Lung-mien even among a whole race of artistic and exquisite natures.

XXI

Thus the entire painting, its landscape, its figures, its architecture, though enriched by Taoist forms and Buddhist fancies, is held together by the classic aesthetic sense that dominates them all. In this way a unity of style is achieved, a perfect welding of the figures to their background. The great massive cliffs, the intertwining clouds and river, the groups of scholars, the Buddhist fairies, the no less ethereal lotuses, all are seen as an impressive whole and as if freed from every human coarseness and limitation. It is the sublimation of the earthly and transitory into the eternal and immutable. This painting in its impersonal splendor, in its complete intellectualization of all the emotional discoveries of Taoist and Buddhist art, represents a climax of the intertwining of the three great plastic evolutions of China. It illustrates what the Confucian traditionalizing process could make of all the great themes, its own, of the Tao, of the images of Buddhist imagination. It is sublime because all of Chinese cultural and aesthetic history, at its finest, is concentrated and plastically conveyed in its vital lines and forms and spaces. It is a monument to the Chinese race as well as to the man who painted it, but especially is it a tribute to the serene and objective vision of that ancient classicism which made them both so great.

XXII

THERE may be some danger that my description of Sung art and the Sung mentality will lead the reader to think of it as a problem in addition, the mere heaping up of different art forms and different ideas. This is not what I would imply, nor would the unity of thought and expression in such a picture as "The White Lotus Club" permit of such an analysis. The art of the Sung classicist differed from pure Confucian art not alone through such surface variations as the acquisition of new themes. The broadening of the horizon between the fourth and the eleventh centuries had created important modifications of Confucian living and thinking, and these in turn had evolved the new plasticity.

Though the relationship of the life and thought of the two periods has, I hope, been made clear by this time, that very resemblance brings out their two main differences, which can nowhere be more clearly discerned than in the paintings of Li Lung-mien.

Let us take, for example, that atmosphere of the exquisite, one could almost say the precious, which has already been singled out in the discussion of Li Lung-mien's architecture. This quality, even if we think of the figure paintings, is nearer in feeling to Confucian art than to the powerful hybrids of T'ang, and again relates our artist to paintings like those of Ku K'ai-chih, rather than to those of Wu Tao-tzŭ and his followers. It indicates clearly the surviving influence of the aristocratic origin of Confucian art.

For the Confucian paintings, like the early jades and other art objects, were frankly the products of a feeling for rank, of a desire to express the quasi-religious conception which they held concerning the necessity and beauty of their social structure. In the Sung dynasty, however, though a Confucian organization existed, rank was no longer a matter of political position. It is said

of Li Lung-mien that he avoided worldly eminence, but that he sought the company of the cultured, and a complete shift of interest from the social to the mental relationships is evidenced as clearly in his art as in his life. A thousand years of scholarship and official examinations, together with the Taoist stimulus to the cultivation of the arts and letters, had transformed the ancient Chinese political state into a hierarchy of the mind, but in this new spiritual kingdom the feeling for rank was no less clearly defined. It has been recounted of Li Lung-mien that he was a master at conveying in a few strokes the position in life of his subjects, not, however, as the ancients had done, through the indication of suitable garments, but by making outward the real inwardness of their beings. Just as classic Confucian art portrayed all the delicate intricacies of a highly developed social structure, so Li Lung-mien's art conveys the subtler complexities of a highly developed intelligencia. No longer does he concern himself with the definition of caste and of social relationships, but instead, nobility of the heart and the interplay of the sensibilities become the basis of this new Confucian plasticity. Though the rhythm of his line is related to that of the earliest men, it has an atmosphere of the non-material, an emphasis of psychology, a reach toward a more intimate comprehension of human ties and loyalties, which the earlier depictions of a simpler society could not and did not contain.

The feeling thus becomes developed for the individual rather than for the class mentality. This is the second fundamental point of difference from early Confucian art, and here again we find a precious remnant of the Taoist struggle. His paintings are not for these reasons plastically finer than those of his mentally less complicated predecessors, for their art impetus was every bit as intense as his; but his content is different, more elusive, more profound, and nearer in character, infinitely nearer, to our no less psychologically aware modernity.

It is these two qualities of the spiritual and the individual which gave such deep significance to Li Lung-mien's work, and lent such a different feeling to his form and line from that of his fellow-Confucians. It is this profound understanding of human nature, of human aspirations, and of the finest human needs, which makes Li Lung-mien stand out above all the other painters of China. Merely from the aesthetic point of view, one might place beside him any of the old masters; but for sheer wisdom, and the individual, quivering, sensitive life-quality which it lent to his art, he is unique in the history of Chinese painting. Though he inherited his subjects, and formed his style on that of his classical predecessors, both were so illuminated by his powerful and highly individual intelligence that one cannot behold so much as an inch of his line without recognizing it as his. At times it has the thunderous force of mountain torrents, at times it flickers with a flame-like grace, but always it is guided by a combination of mind and skill that leaves even the most sensitive of plastic imaginations nothing to wish for. This depth of vision and the severity of style, crowded with significance, which it created, make it impossible that Li Lung-mien should ever have the popularity, say of Raphael's mild-eyed Madonnas; but whoever loves brave thinking—the disciplined intellectualism and the triumphant objectivity of China at its broadest and best—and all those who are haunted by the search for the exquisite and the pure, these spirits will find in Li Lung-mien's art a refuge, a consolation, and a reward such as life will but rarely offer them.

Li Lung-mien's lesser importance lies in this, that he was technically as well as mentally an eclectic, that he preserved for us, without diminishing their value, practically all of the great art traditions of China. He summed up its aesthetic history, just as the Sung dynasty summed up its intellectual history. The pictorial products of the early fourth to sixth centuries are very close to him,

the T'ang dynasty is worthily reflected, and even the unique delicacy of the ancient arts with which he loved to surround himself is likewise suggested, not only in his work, but in the fastidious nicety of the materials which he preferred to use. He has not quite the majesty of the first Confucians, because the feeling of awe was not possible to so critical an age; nor can he make the passionate appeal of the Chin Taoists or the T'ang Buddhists, since he had only an historical appreciation of the things for which those men had lived and died. But if none of the work of the early Chinese painters had come down to us, we should still be able to judge the force and beauty of their inspiration, as well as its manifold directions, from the all but unrivalled splendor of the art of Li Lung-mien.

If this achievement of an impersonal comprehensiveness was perfection, it contained for that very reason the seed of decay and death. It is the final proof of the completeness of Li's Confucianism that it was sterile. In spite of the beauty of his style and the breadth of his interests, he founded no new traditions, made no great new contribution that followers could develop. The Hsüan-ho Hua-p'u declares that he founded an entirely new school, but if this be so, the worthy pupils of this great teacher have not yet come to light. Nor will they. For Li Lung-mien was the plastic completion, the final statement in purely Chinese terms, of all their art motifs, whether indigenous or foreign. He spoke the last word, and there followed not even so much as a clear echo.

XXIII

WHAT is perhaps most astonishing in this utter silence that follows upon Li's loud challenge to the art world of China, is the failure of any painter to continue worthily Li Lung-mien's depiction of the horse. Ancient as was this art

in China, no one had ever raised it to the freedom, the positive abandon of expression which was reached by his brush in the swift delineation of mounted archers, of wild horses dashing freely about the plains, of Tartars performing the most extraordinary feats for the delectation of the emperors. We know but three of Li Lung-mien's horse paintings, one of which is illustrated,[1] and two others which are in the Freer collection at the Smithsonian Institution; of these we cannot say positively that they are the work of the master, but even if they are copies, they indicate such a high degree of excellence, that it is difficult to understand why they did not supplant the traditions of Han Kan with a new and much more vigorous influence.

For between the work of these two painters there can be but one choice. If there is any field in which Lung-mien transcends all his fellow-artists, it is in this one. Even among the Chinese critics there is a unanimity of opinion on this question. The Hua Chi gives its decision[2] thus: "His horses looked like flying dragons, and their coats had the quality of jade. They were beautifully decorated and resembled those famous Han chargers that travelled a thousand leagues a day and sweated blood. In comparison with him we feel that Chên Hung's work is less valuable, nor is that of Han Kan remarkable beside it. Therefore the poem of Tung-p'o says: 'Lung-mien carries in his breast the image of a thousand horses. He paints not only their flesh but their very bones.'"

Into the solemn if magnificent Confucian processions of Han Kan, the Sung painter has injected all the fire and freedom of his Taoist training, and achieves thereby a variety of action such as no other horse painter ever evinced. Had it not been for his understanding of the merits in the more formal, classic

[1] In plates 1 and 2. Photographs of another of Li's famous horse paintings may be found in the Kokka, No. 380.

[2] Chap. 3, p. 2 b.

treatment, his own works might have failed of solidity, as did, for instance, many of the Tartar painters whose powers of observation and technique make their works otherwise of signal merit. Such foreigners as Hu Ch'ien, whom we have already mentioned, and the Prince of Tung-Tan, whom Li has copied,[1] did superb things, but never achieved the Chinese firmness of structure. On the other hand, if Li had merely been another typically Confucian horse painter, he would no doubt have fallen into the fine, but somewhat steady and uninspired, cavalcades of such unoriginal followers of Han Kan as Ch'ên Chü-chung.[2] For that is how, in the main, the horse painters that follow the great T'ang trio, Ts'ao Pa, Chên Hung, and Han Kan, are to be divided, the one group being somewhat too overwhelmed by precedent, the other not quite alive to its value.

Li Lung-mien, feeling deeply his classic models, appreciating the insight and individuality of the untrained but observing Tartar temperament, and above all things loving the emperor's equine beauties as warmly as any western nomad ever could, evolved a style all his own, that united the dignity of ancient China to the *verve* and intimate knowledge of a man of the plains. Is this perhaps the reason, this rare combination that they show of the classic and the wildly romantic, this beautiful mingling of love and understanding, why Li's bounding chargers were never copied? It is said in the Hsüan-ho Hua-p'u that Li Lung-mien's careful and traditional work was at times successfully imitated, but that his abandoned and sketchy style could never be approached by any one. No doubt this was so, for underneath the calm and controlled exterior of his Confucian demeanor, there beat a heart that never could be tamed, that was bound to express its love of utter freedom even though it had early learned to do so in exacting forms and mea-

[1] Category I, No. 14. Category IV, No. 7. [2] A late twelfth century artist.

sures. His Taoist impulsiveness seems to have felt no restraint, but actually found an inspiration, in the Confucian standards and traditions, just as a great poet feels an incentive rather than a burden in the stern exigencies of his metre. But such natures are rare. Few are and ever will be the men who can formulate a great emotion without killing it, and Lung-mien's horse paintings must ever remain dear to us because the ardor of the Chinese race is in them, as well as its formidable intellect.

XXIV

THOUGH these paintings remained inimitable, the copyists were numerous, and because of the high prices which his pictures brought, forgeries were only too often attempted. Even during his own lifetime, says Lu Yu in the Lao-hsüeh-an Pi-chi,[1] his page, named Chao Kuang, is supposed to have traced his line so skilfully that the best critics could not tell their work apart. The interesting but highly improbable story reads as follows: "Chao Kuang, a native of Ho-fei,[2] was page to Li Po-shih. Whenever Po-shih began a painting, he would tell him to stand by his side. In the course of time, Chao Kuang was himself able to paint; especially skilful was he in making horse pictures which were almost indistinguishable from the genuine originals [by Li Po-shih]. During the Chien-yen period [A.D. 1127–1130], he was made a prisoner by the rebels,[3] who, having heard of his skill in painting, tried to make him portray the women they were carrying off. Kuang resolutely declined to do this on the pretext that he could not paint, and, even at the point of the sword, he still refused. They therefore cut off the thumb of his right hand and ordered him away. The truth is that Kuang had always painted with the left hand. When the rebellion was over, he painted nothing but images of

[1] Bk. II, p. 4. [2] Lu-chou. [3] The Golden Tartars.

Kuan-yin Ta-shih[1] and died after a few years. At present, the pictures of Kuan-yin, alleged to have been done by Po-shih, are, from what I have seen in the collections of scholars and officials, most of them from the brush of Kuang."

Of this man's paintings I have not been able to identify any specimens; but that this story may be discounted is proved by the fact that another critic, Yeh Mêng-tê,[2] praises equally highly the work of a copyist named Fan-lung, whose attempts to do a Li Lung-mien may be judged by a scroll now in the Freer collection at the Smithsonian Institution. Fan-lung uses the same techniques and compositions as does Lung-mien, but the decadent and sickening quality of his line, the utterly unworthy character of his workmanship, prove once more how unreliable the statements of the Chinese critics can be.

In fact, Mi Fei, who is always an impatient but a very independent and discerning critic, scoffs at the idea of confusing Lung-mien's work with that of his pupils. In the Hua Shih, as quoted by the Shu-hua-p'u,[3] he says: "The painting by Li Kung-lin in my possession, entitled 'The Heavenly King,' although charming, is trifling, weak, and lacking in style. As a matter of fact, it was done by his pupils. The paintings [of Kung-lin] collected by the nobility are usually of this class."

The extent to which Lung-mien's art was a climax in the Chinese pictorial development is demonstrated not only by the fact that he failed to establish any new traditions, but by the even more significant fact that none of his successors can be considered his equal in a single branch of artistic expression. He was the last great figure painter, the only man in the whole Sung galaxy

[1] Kuan-yin, the Great Scholar. The repetition of this story à propos of one of Li's disciples emphasizes its improbability in either case.

[2] See Category II, No. 50. [3] Chap. 96, p. 66 b.

of artists who in this respect can be measured by the standards of the ancients; he was also the last painter of landscape in the classic style, nor can the landscapes in the then traditionalized Taoist manner which made the fame of the Southern Sung period be said to equal those of Li Lung-mien. After him there was nothing but pure formula, splendid at times, as in the work of Hsia Kuei and Ma Yüan, but not intellectually as powerful, not as free and varied in the use of abstract form as are the works of Li Lung-mien. Both these later masters have in their structures and techniques something repetitional, something that is routine rather than formula, a monotony, in short, of which Lung-mien was never guilty. Taoism had gone completely to the wall, except as its inventions still lived in Confucian schematizations. Even in these we already sense the flattening of planes, and a certain obviousness of composition, that indicate the running down of the Confucian machinery, and point prophetically to the mechanical productions of Yüan and Ming. Had Li Lung-mien found a new theme, there would have been followers to retell it; but since he merely repeated in a perfected plasticity the sagas and experiences of his race, there could be no sequel to his thought or to his form. And there was none.

XXV

Though Li Lung-mien's use of ink was so subtle as to lend to his art an infinite variation in tone, color, in the commonly accepted sense of the word, is but sparingly encountered in his work. The paintings that we know, with the exception of "The Return of Tao Yüan-ming," which has every mark of being a copy of some T'ang master, are done with ink in an outline which the critics, because of its strength, term his "iron wire" style. In these outline paintings colors are not often used, except in some work done late in life,

of which one beautiful example has come down to us,[1] that shows delicate flesh-tinting and slight washes of faint color discreetly distributed throughout the composition. The hasty assertion of the Chinese critics that Lung-mien used color only when copying a colored painting, is not reliable, for Mi Fei expressly tells us that "The Gathering in a Western Garden,"[2] which, from the contemporary nature of its subject, was unquestionably an original, was done in the brilliantly colorful style of Li Chao-tao. If he did one such painting, he may have done more. The catalogue also speaks, without defining them as copies, of Lohans in color,[3] in one instance of a colored horse painting,[4] and again of a "Night Promenade in Colors";[5] but the very fact that these titles mention the color would indicate that its use was as unusual as our experience with the paintings would lead us to suppose. Indeed, even the copies in color must have been rare, for Tu Mu, in his Yü-yi Pien, while speaking of the "Meeting of Li Mi with the Prince of Ch'in,"[6] says: "I have seen many pictures by Li Lung-mien in outline style, but this is the only colored painting that has come to my notice." The only colored copy still extant[7] is on paper, but the numerous colored copies mentioned in the catalogue are invariably painted on silk, and our experience and the catalogue also agree that the outline paintings upon silk are often additional copies of his own work made by Li Lung-mien himself. More often, however, the paintings on silk and in ink are copies from older masters, and we hear that in one case[8] Li also copied colored work in ink. Tung Ch'i-ch'ang declares[9] frankly that he does not believe Li Lung-mien ever painted an original composition on silk; and

[1] What is, perhaps, the choicest example of Li Lung-mien's art in my possession, a painting of "Twelve Lohans" in exquisite coloring, is unfortunately so fine in line that it defied every attempt at reproduction.

[2] Category II, No. 12. [3] Category III, No. 8. [4] Category I, No. 5. [5] Category II, No. 10.

[6] *Ibid.*, No. 26. [7] The painting of "Twelve Lohans" in the Meyer collection.

[8] Category V, No. 10. [9] *Ibid.*, No. 14.

indeed the catalogue records what our paintings verify, namely, that the greatest and the best known of Li's paintings[1] were done in his "iron wire" style upon Ch'êng Hsin T'ang paper. The question is also complicated by an alarming quotation found in the "Encyclopedia of Chinese Literature, Ancient and Modern" from the Shu-hua-shih of Ch'ên Chi-ju,[2] in which he states: "It is reported that in the imperial treasury there are numerous scrolls of outline pictures of men and horses done by Li Po-shih and many other ancient artists. His present majesty[3] had all those pictures taken out and ordered the court painters serving in the Wu-ying Palace to fill them in with colors. When done, they were handed in again and stored away in the imperial treasury." Such was the taste of the Ming emperors.

To sum up our observations on this point, it is reasonably fair to assume that paintings by Li Lung-mien on paper in ink are originals; likewise those on paper in color; ink paintings on silk are copies of older masters, or of Li's own work made by himself; paintings on silk in color are also copies of older work. This discussion, be it noted, does not concern itself with the identification of a real Li Lung-mien from forgeries, or from later copies of his own work, but attempts only to analyze the artist's preferences as to materials.

XXVI

Since Li Lung-mien's materials are so important an element of his art, it is necessary to appreciate somewhat further his choice in these matters. For in the production of these conventional tools, the silks, papers, brushes, and inks, as in all other phases of Chinese art-expression, the element of heredity

[1] Among others Category II, Nos. 7, 8, 62.

[2] A scholar living A.D. 1558–1639.

[3] Either Shên-tsung or Chuang-lieh-ti.

played its part, and evolved a feeling for sheer quality, the refinement of which is in itself a tribute to the Chinese race. The firm textures and soft hues of their silks, the surfaces and substance of their papers, were not accidental, but the constantly improved results of a long line of sensitive artisans, whose labors, like those of the artists, were often guarded and encouraged by no less a personage than the emperor himself. In fact, the whole history of Chinese arts and crafts should some day be written from the point of view of royal influences, for, from its earliest semi-religious manifestations, the relationship of art to the court was necessarily close, with mutual reactions that were extremely interesting and important. Like so much else in China that was rare and lovely, Li Lung-mien's favorite paper, called Ch'êng Hsin T'ang paper, owes its existence to such royal connoisseurship.

The Ch'êng Hsin T'ang, or Mind-clarifying Hall, after which this paper was named, was built in A.D. 968 by the last Emperor[1] of Southern T'ang, on the summit of a hill to the north of modern Nanking, Kiangsu, overlooking the Yangtze River. Famous because the air was fresh and cool there, even in the sultry season of the year, it served as a summer retreat for the emperor and also as his library and studio. Here it was that this artistic ruler began to make the paper that later became so famous. From various sources we find the characteristics of Ch'êng Hsin T'ang paper described as finely textured, glossy, strong, smooth, thin, and silvery white. It was not made from raw materials, but was re-made from another excellent paper of the period, called the Hui or Shê paper. In other words, the Ch'êng Hsin T'ang paper was merely an improved type of the Shê paper. It was not without defects, for the sheets were often narrow and short, making it necessary for the artist, when he wished to paint a scroll, to join together a great number of pieces to obtain the required length.

[1] Reigned A.D. 962–978.

Before Li Lung-mien's time, the painter Hsü Hsi[1] had an equally great fondness for Ch'êng Hsin T'ang paper, and always preferred it for his pictures of birds, flowers, and fruit. We hear also that Huang Shan-ku, Li's friend, used it for calligraphy. The Emperor Kao-tsung, as well as the Yüan artist Chao Mêng-fu,[2] calligraphed various sutras upon it, and we are also told that it served Mi Fei's son, Mi Yu-jên, for the depiction of one of his misty landscapes. It was likewise prized for taking impressions of ancient calligraphies upon stone slabs as early as A.D. 992 by T'ai-tsung and his Academicians.

Li Lung-mien's well-known preference for this paper, and the unqualified praises bestowed upon it by the Sung poets and artists, have given rise to the belief among occidental students that it must have been the most beautiful of Sung papers; but it by no means deserves so unique a distinction. Various Sung authorities, Mi Fei among others, are constantly alluding to other papers of older and contemporary manufacture that they seem to consider equally fine, if not finer. The various Chinese art-books list as many as fifteen papers that were commonly used by the Sung calligraphists and painters. The Shê paper, for example, made in the district of that name, was "smooth, glossy, white, and very lovable." There were also the "rattan white" (*T'êng-po*), "Wild Goose White" (*Ku-po*), and "Po-yang White" papers, of which each sheet measured from thirty to fifty Chinese feet. Others were the "cocoon paper," which Li Lung-mien was known to use,[3] "bamboo," and "gray-black-ruled" (*Wus-su-lan*) paper, a product of Po-chou, Anhui; also "large-sized," "Kuan-yin watermark," and "versicolored and powdered" paper, which Su Shih and Huang Shan-ku loved to use for painting and calligraphy. "Yellow and white copying" paper was not in two colors but was a white paper dyed yellow to defeat the ravages of the bookworm to which it was

[1] Lived A.D. 937–975. [2] Lived A.D. 1254–1322. [3] Category II, No. 31.

very subject, and "blue clouds and spring-trees," "dragon and phoenix," "round flower-design," and "golden-flowered" are titles that describe the watermarkings of various other famous papers.

At the beginning of the Sung dynasty, the Ch'êng Hsin T'ang paper aroused no greater interest than any of those above named; but in the eleventh century it won the attention of the distinguished scholar Liu Pan, who composed a poem singing its praises, and invited several other scholars, such as Ou-yang Hsiu (A.D. 1007–1072), Mei Yao-ch'ên (A.D. 1002–1060), Su Tung-p'o, and others, to do likewise. In this way the name of the paper was made, and its fame rang throughout the land; the demand for it among the cultured classes became suddenly so great that one packet or scroll would fetch a hundred ounces of silver, and often it was not procurable at any price.

At the end of the twelfth century, an imitation Ch'êng Hsin T'ang paper was manufactured, as the original stock had become very scarce; and Fei Cho, a Yüan scholar, in his "Book of Papers" declares that the exact pattern of the Ch'êng Hsin T'ang paper of Nan T'ang was used in this later product. Ch'ien-lung also had manufactured a variety of paper which was called Ch'êng Hsin T'ang, but it was heavily ornamented with gilt designs, and much thicker than the "thin, silvery white" sheets of which the Sung poets sang.

Another famous variety of paper which Lung-mien treasured was entitled "white flax."[1] This was originally made by the Chin and Sung peoples (A.D. 265–479) from good cloth, and is known to have been much liked by Wang Hsi-chih for calligraphies and by Lu T'an-wei for painting. It took the very highest art to use this paper, as its loose texture easily spread the ink, and only such great masters of the brush as Wang and Lu, or Li, dared to put their skill to such a test.

[1] See Category III, No. 10.

It is now very difficult to distinguish the papers, as time has invariably affected the tones, but we can quite definitely identify the Ch'êng Hsin T'ang make, as we are told that it was used by Li Lung-mien for the painting of the great Shu River scroll,[1] now in the Freer collection. Even with this scroll, whose genuineness cannot be questioned, as a point of departure, it is still difficult to say positively which of the other specimens are the same. For example, we do not know what the "plain paper" was, of which Ch'ien-lung's catalogue so frequently speaks in connection with Lung-mien's paintings, and though a specialist might be able to settle the point, I should not venture to say which of the other papers do or do not resemble that of the Shu River scroll.

XXVII

This scroll of the Shu River was not mentioned when Li's landscapes were under discussion because it was never intended by its author to be anything but one of those faithful topographical maps of which we find mention in Chinese literature as far back as the fourth century B.C.[2] The modern names of this river are Min Kiang and Yangtze Kiang. All its landmarks of contemporary or ancient fame, whether mountain peaks, cities, tributary streams, monuments, or temples, are not only pictorially indicated, but written above them, in Mi Fei's minutest and most careful calligraphy, are their ancient names. There has been some dispute about the writing on the scroll, because Tung Ch'i-ch'ang declared that Lung-mien himself had penned the inscriptions, but all other scholars, ancient or modern, are against him in the controversy, and it is therefore safe to assume that the calligraphy is actually that

[1] Category V, No. 16.

[2] See Giles, *Introduction to the History of Chinese Pictorial Art*, 2d ed., p. 3.

of Mi Fei.[1] The very fact that Lung-mien asked his friend to cover the upper half of his drawing indicates definitely that Li did not look upon this scroll as a work of art, for he never permits any of his other paintings to be so marred. There is, indeed, absolutely no aesthetic content in the whole panorama. The view from beginning to end is minute and quite literal. So expert a master of the brush as Li could not make even a topographical rendering of a scene without delicacy and charm; but one need only compare the Shu River scroll with the landscape of "The White Lotus Club," to perceive clearly that the former has an entirely different purpose, and belongs to a different order of ideas. The one was intended for practical use, as the other was intended for the plastic expression of philosophic ideas; and the two things are as much related as are our geographical maps to the modern art movement. The mere fact that the Chinese use the same tools for both purposes should not confuse the question for any one of aesthetic sensibility.

For this reason I cannot agree with Laufer[2] when he says that these maps are the foundation of the later schools of landscape art. It is true we have ample records of Chinese cartography, both for civil and military purposes, long before landscape painting was developed as an art; but this scientific pursuit went on, as the Shu River scroll indicates, without acquiring an aesthetic purpose, long after landscape painting was an accomplished fact. As early as the Liang dynasty, moreover, the Emperor Yüan-ti in his essay on landscape painting warns against the use of map techniques for the drawing of distant mountains. It may be advanced in favor of Dr. Laufer's theory that this is another instance in which the beautiful developed from the useful, as so often happened in the history of Confucian art. However, the classic arts

[1] See Category V, No. 16, for further discussion of the matter.

[2] See his Wang Wei, *Ostasiatische Monatshefte*, April, 1912.

that arose from the needs of the state, contained immediately the plastic element; moreover, Chinese landscape art sprang, not from a practical Confucian source, but from the aesthetic impulse that was inherent in Taoist metaphysics. Between these two psychologies, that of the literal map rendering and that of art production, there is no relationship, no natural bridge; and when the impulse developed in the Chin dynasty for the pictorial expression of the Taoist love of nature, it was not associated either in thought or in environment with the imperial or Confucian needs that had for many centuries produced the topographical maps.

XXVIII

The Hsüan-ho Hua-p'u declares that in his literary productions Li Lung-mien had the style of the Chien-an (A.D. 196–220) or later Han period, thus placing him in an era that was still strictly classic. We are bound to accept this statement without cavil, as it has unfortunately been possible to discover only a few of his minor poems, that refer to days spent in the examination halls, or upon delightful picnics among blooming peach-trees, but give no real clue to his characteristics as a man of letters.

If we now turn to a consideration of another art which Li practised, namely, that of calligraphy, to which the Chinese critics with their scholarly and traditional minds ever assign the first place, we see once more a beautiful corroboration of the staid and classic temper which we have described as eminently that of Li Lung-mien. Since the day that Wang Hsi-chih first divided the calligraphists of his country into the Northern and Southern schools, all the great scribes of China, in spite of the fifty-six styles mentioned by Wei Hsü,[1] can be grouped under one of the two divisions, according as they leaned

[1] P'ei-wên-chai, Bk. I, p. 29.

toward the "informal" hand, in which a man's individuality could be freely expressed, or to the more constrained "lesser seal-writing," which had its origin in the Ch'in dynasty, and was ever adhered to by the more Confucian-minded scholars. I am fortunate in possessing a scroll on which, side by side, and treating the same subject, the beauty of the bamboo, are two essays, the one written by Mi Fei, the purest Taoist mentality which the Sung dynasty produced, the other by that archprotagonist of all that was best in Confucian thought, the poet-statesman Su Tung-p'o. Both men were the leading calligraphists of their period, and this scroll fairly breathes forth the very essence of Chinese cultural history; for the one hand is as temperamental, as sensitive to the least deviation of the mind, as the other is controlled and impersonal in its technique, the former as much the incarnation of the spirit of romanticism, as the latter is the soul of classicism. From the few seemingly genuine calligraphies of Li Lung-mien that are preserved to us, and the innumerable copies, we can quite definitely discern his style; and though it is not as opulent in its beauty as the stately ink-pictures of Tung-p'o, it is invariably in the same severely classic "li" style, with an even greater rigidity and precision of line. The signatures on his paintings, moreover, are all in the lesser seal hand, called Pa Fên, that harks back to the Han dynasty. We read in histories that Li Lung-mien practised with brilliant originality the freer styles instituted by Wang Hsi-chih and his followers, and it would not be surprising that the Taoist side of his nature should occasionally and successfully seek this form of outlet. But, so far, examples of this sort have been denied us, and we can base our judgment only upon the beautiful classic specimens that have survived. A man's calligraphy is the most immediate index to his character; and there, more than anywhere else, more clearly even than in the misty outlines of his official career, more clearly than in the multi-colored texture of his

pictorial self, do we behold Li Lung-mien's adherence to the ancient patterns for the conduct of life. Though many additional strands, motives that had never occupied his forbears, were made to yield to his calligraphic as to his pictorial art a newer, richer, subtler, and more individual hue, here again it is evident for all to see that Li Lung-mien, even as his Chou ancestors, was convinced that "the beautiful is secured through conformity to sanctioned standards."

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